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PARENTS AS CONSUMER-CITIZENS:
AN INVESTIGATION INTO
PARENT GOVERNORS

THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
PhD

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CENTRE FOR SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL RESEARCH IN
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ABSTRACT

The study takes as its problematic that parents are increasingly being viewed as consumers and that this conception of parents is too limiting. It goes on to argue that the notion of the consumer should, however, not be discarded altogether, and that the alternative notion of citizenship is in itself insufficient.

Based on an appreciation of developments in consumer studies and consumerism, four models of consumer empowerment are outlined. Each model is associated with different types of consumer activity (see below). Building on this, an alternative concept of the consumer-citizen and its constituent dimensions is proposed as an ideal type.

models of empowerment	dimensions of consumer-citizen ideal type
competitive market	• choosing
personal control	• doing • checking
quality assurance	• applying
participative	• participating
[<i>pervading all models:</i>]	• acting as a member of a political community • being relatively less powerful/influential than 'producers' • act/process of consumption

The thesis then explores how far a particular group of parents - parent governors - appears to resemble the ideal type: ie how far their views and actions accord with the expectations of the concept. Data from questionnaires completed by parent governors in 1988 and 1992 are used to do this.

The study concludes that the consumer-citizen concept is a more accurate and useful analytical tool than the 'consumer' or the 'citizen'. Its empirical findings are generative, rather than firm conclusions. Attention is drawn to limitations in the data collected and to challenges that may be made to the validity of this data, including issues relating to the aggregation of data which was undertaken for the purposes of statistical analysis. The main findings are that the parent governors surveyed are more likely to resemble a specific variant of the ideal type, ie the

incorporated consumer-citizen. In terms of the consumer-citizen dimensions, they are most likely to approve of *acting as a member of a political community* (representing the school's interests to the local education authority) and *checking* (evaluating the school's performance), and less likely to see their role as making decisions (*doing*), though approval of this increased significantly since 1988. Avenues for further work are suggested.

* * * * *

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1. INTRODUCTION

The perception of parents as consumers is a recent phenomenon, associated particularly with the Government's education reforms begun in the 1980s. Key aspects of these reforms are concerned with choice and competition between schools and with parental representation in school government, and they are closely identified with applying the notion of service users as 'consumers' in the context of a state education system (Glatter 1989; Ranson 1990; Saunders and Rigg 1991).

The ascent of the notion of parents as consumers is the cause of much debate and, for some, extreme distaste. Its applicability or appropriateness (and the policy implications associated with it) are strongly advocated (by Chubb and Moe 1990 and Flew 1989, for example) and equally strongly contested (see Sallis 1988 and Ranson 1990, for example). One point of view on the left, whence much of the criticism comes, is that consumerism is here to stay because people want it:

Consumer-led educational policies are clearly so popular that a return to producer-led policy is both politically impracticable as well as unsound...socialists must, therefore...assert the importance of substantially increased parental power... (Reynolds 1989: 178).

Yet many *parents* appear to be puzzled by the term consumer when used in relation to school education. Hughes *et al.* (1990: 14) found that almost a half of parents reacted this way when

asked if they saw themselves as a consumer when thinking about their child's education: 'what do you mean?', 'in what respect?', 'I don't understand the question', 'I don't think like that' and 'I'm a farmer simple as that' were some of the reactions which Hughes and his team noted. Amongst the parents who did see themselves as consumers, their reasons for doing so varied¹.

How should parents be perceived? The question is significant because whatever term is used brings with it a conceptual framework and theoretical underpinnings which say much about the role and influence of parents in the education of their children. The parental relationship to schooling has been characterised in many different ways² The purpose of this work is to examine the notion of parents as consumers³. It is a notion to

¹ Forty three per cent of parents saw themselves as consumers of school education 'to some extent' or 'very much so'. The reasons they gave varied:

- will expect to more because of the National Curriculum but still find it hard to use the term
- to a certain extent in that parents must keep an eye on what is going on, but on the other hand I regret the passing of trust between parent and teacher
- not entirely like buying a packet of biscuits, you're putting in as much as you're taking out
- like going out and spending your money on something - are you getting value for money?
- if I only had one school to choose from I might not have thought of myself as a consumer, but as I had choice I did

(parents' comments reported in Hughes et al. 1990:14)

² Various types or characterisations of parents and typologies of parental activity have been generated by work on parental involvement in education. These include the 'professional parent' of Beattie (1985: 249-250), the 'active citizen' of Salisbury (1980: 19) in America and of Ranson (1990: 16) in England and Wales, parents conceived as co-producers (Coleman et al. 1991: 5) and as active partners (Phillips 1989: 103), parents as the school's legal clients (Macbeth 1989: 4), types of parent governor (Golby and Brigley 1989: 6-10), Pugh's typology of parental involvement (Pugh 1989: 5-7), and Macbeth's typology of participatory action (Macbeth et al. 1980: 23-24; Macbeth 1989: 131).

³ Parents here, and in subsequent chapters are are treated as the consumers of education. It is evident, however, that limiting consumer status to parents is not unproblematic (it could be argued, for example, that pupils are the real consumers - see Davis 1990 for an argument that pupils should be seen as

which there are evidently various reactions and which is in need of critical exploration and clarification. It is argued that the problematic nature of the notion results in great measure from the fact that the relationship between parents and schools is a particular example of a more general relationship between consumer and public service which itself needs exploration and adequate conceptualisation.

Ideal Type Construction

The question 'how should parents be perceived?' needs to be expressed more exactly. The matter at issue is how those who relate to school education as parents can be described by means of a concept, or conceptual framework (a set of related concepts), which most accurately reflects the role and activities that characterise that relationship. The task is not one of definition but involves the sociological work of constructing an ideal type, that is a 'rationalising reconstruction of a particular kind of behaviour' (Aron 1967: 210).

The process of type construction has been posited as central to - indeed as a defining element of - sociology, and as involving giving special emphasis to (even caricaturing) certain aspects of the subject (Rex 1973: 10,192). The ideal type abstracts 'from empirical reality in an idealizing or exaggerating fashion' (Burger 1976: 154). In addition, the ideal-type is not simply describing

customers). In the final chapter it will be emphasised that the consumer-citizen ideal type is not limited to parents and can be applied to all non-producer groups, ie all who use, receive, pay for or indirectly benefit from goods and services.

the present or what has gone. Its significance lies also in what it indicates of the future and the orientation it provides to change which is in process. Writing of Weber's typologies, Rex (1973: 211) observes:

More than merely recognising the possibility of change, they seek to give an explicit account of the logical and theoretical possibilities so far as the direction of change is concerned.

Albrow (1990) points to the dangers that can arise with the pursuit of conceptual explorations that remain purely conceptual. These include remoteness from reality, irrelevance to most people's concerns, and the generation of interminable arguments of interest only to the participants. Hence it is emphasised that the essential purpose of ideal type construction is to 'provide points of orientation for...empirical work' (Albrow 1990: 278). This empirical work is inevitably a process of sullyng the theoretical construction, of moving away from the purity of ideal concepts in the direction of 'multifarious nuances of form and content, clarity and meaning...a chaos of infinitely differentiated and highly contradictory complexes of ideas and feelings' (Weber 1949: 96).

The fundamental concerns of sociology, as Weber developed it, are people's actions, why they do what they do and the meanings which explain those actions. At the root of his perspective was the conviction that the meaning of individuals' actions 'however comprehensively understood in context and by others, had in the

end always to be a meaning that they [the individuals] could at least possibly possess, whether they understood it or not' (Albrow 1990: 139). Theoretical abstractions should not be mistaken for the reality they purport to explain. Parallels can be drawn with Popper's view that 'we must regard all laws or theories as hypothetical or conjectural' (Popper 1979: 9). However many times a hypothesis or theory is confirmed, by whatever tests are considered appropriate, it always remains a human creation, likely to be overtaken by new and better hypotheses, and should not be confused with the mass of phenomena that exist in the reality 'out there'. The ideal type is a theoretical abstraction, as are all concepts and theories. The essential transitoriness of Weber's ideal types, because of the nature of the phenomena they are used to study, is highlighted by Albrow in his analysis of Weber's development of sociology:

What Weber called 'the flow of life' provided an endless set of questions, problems and viewpoints.

Classifications were therefore bound to be transcended by events ... [Order] was constructed around reference points, which themselves changed over time, and which are themselves subject to a wide variety of interpretations by participants and observers alike (Albrow 1990: 153).

Critics of the ideal type have raised issues concerning its clarity and status as a component of the sociological method. In particular, it has been argued that it is unclear whether the definition of an ideal type is intended to be nominal and

instrumental or real and an end in itself - that is, whether an ideal type is solely a category to aid research, a heuristic device to be used so long as it is useful in guiding empirical research, or whether it is meant to be a description of social reality, a 'summary representation of common aspects of many phenomena' (Burger 1976:29), and as such (notwithstanding Albrow above) a goal of research. Outhwaite (1983: 124-125), for example, argues that Weber moves, as his work progresses, from a tendency towards the latter, 'real' definition to the use of nominal definitions, and concludes that he is 'inconsistent in his approach to definition'. Related to this is concern about the status of ideal types. They are 'not hypotheses but means for the construction of hypotheses..., the result of someone's experience, interests and values', but

if a hypothesis is abandoned does this place a question mark over the ideal type? Or does the ideal type remain good however many hypotheses are tested and refuted? Furthermore, do we simply assume that one person's ideal type is as good as the next person's? (Dickens 1990: 173)

The view taken in this study is that the ideal type must be seen as a representation of reality⁴ - or, to be more precise (bearing in

⁴ The notion of 'reality' is not unproblematic. Tensions between realism and constructivism are alluded to in the methodological discussion in Chapter 6, as is the notion of 'subtle realism' which seeks to overcome the dichotomy between the two (Hammersley 1992). 'Subtle realism' involves both a belief that there are phenomena independent of our claims about them and a recognition that we do not have unmediated contact with these phenomena (and, following from this, that research accounts are 'selective constructions'). The view taken in this study in relation to ideal types is aligned to this perspective of 'subtle realism'.

mind the Popperian view on theory, mentioned above), it must be seen as an attempt to represent reality. This applies even where it is used as a heuristic device in preparation for empirical work. The ideal type must have a grounding in some appreciation and analysis (however rudimentary) of the phenomenon to be studied. It follows from this that later work may show the ideal type in need of modification, if it becomes apparent that it is too far removed from the reality it purports to represent or caricature. Hence, there must be an emphasis on the 'continual reconstruction' of ideal types, a 'process of re-interpretation which is never-ending' (Kasler 1988: 183). It also follows from this view that all ideal types are not necessarily of equal validity. Some are better attempts at representing the portion of reality they are concerned with than others. But how is the relationship between ideal type and this reality articulated?

There are similarities between that relationship and the notion of 'dialogue' between concept and evidence which has been posited as the disciplining element of historical enquiry (Thompson 1978: 231-232, Brehony 1987: 655-656). This 'dialogue', according to Thompson, is conducted by successive hypotheses on the one hand, and empirical research on the other, and he emphasises that the 'ultimate court of appeal' is not the evidence by itself, but the evidence 'interrogated thus'. What the notion of 'dialogue' encapsulates for me is the movement, the to-ing and fro-ing between theoretical construction and the empirical reality under study. In terms of the ideal type developed later, this 'dialogue' can be seen as having two stages. The first is the developmental stage in which theoretical construction is formed

(as is explained below) on the basis of my experience in the consumer movement. The second is the research stage in which the ideal type, using data gathered in a specific research exercise, is deployed as a yardstick and hypothesis-generating concept. Although formally distinguishable, the two stages in practice overlap, with theoretical development of the new ideal type continuing during and in response to the process of empirical enquiry. The important point is that the development of the ideal type is open for inspection (as well as the empirical data generated by the specific research exercise). Accordingly, the 'story' of its development is set out in some detail in Appendix A.

The approach can be summarised as follows. The developmental stage sets up a plausible ideal type. The research stage enables us to establish whether people (in the chosen context for the empirical work) respond in ways that the ideal type leads us to expect and whether the ideal type helps in understanding the specific phenomenon under study. The more people appear to respond in ways not expected, the more likely it is that the ideal type will need modification. Whether and how this should be done will depend on the details of the research findings.

Theme and Topic

C Wright Mills, in his discussion of intellectual craftsmanship, urges the sociologist to distinguish between *theme* - 'an idea, usually of some signal trend, some master conception, or a key distinction...' - and *topic*, which constitutes the specific subject of study (Mills 1970: 237). This is a distinction which helps in

clarifying and setting out the issues which constitute the subject of this study.

The theme of the study is the *concept of the consumer and a concern that this is an inadequate conceptualisation of relationship between public services and those who use, receive, pay for or indirectly benefit from them* (the point applies to private goods and services too, though these are not the main focus of the study). At the same time, it is accepted that the notion of the consumer remains an important aspect of conceptualising public service users. It is argued that the concept of the consumer needs revision and that there is a need to develop an ideal type that more satisfactorily conceptualises the role and position of non-producers. The consumer role and characteristic activities are explored and a narrow and a broad conception of the consumer contrasted. It is argued that the notion of the consumer is bound up with seeing consumers as relatively powerless and vulnerable. Hence, consumerism is characterised by policies aimed at empowering people in their role as consumers. As the study unfolded it became clear that a second theme underlay the research, that of the notion of empowerment. This led to an appreciation of the need to define it and the construction of four models of empowerment (which played an important role in developing the ideal type of the consumer-citizen).

The study's specific topic is *parent representation in the government of school education in England and Wales*. There are several reasons that suggested this particular topic area. The

ascent of the contentious notion of parents as consumers of school education has been alluded to above. Parent representation on governing bodies has been a phenomenon of increasing importance in recent years. The 1980 Education Act made parent governors a legal requirement. Prior to this there were indications that parent representation was growing 'naturally' (Woods 1984: 11). Proposals to extend parents' influence in school government further (Department of Education and Science/Welsh Office 1984) were followed by legislation intended to achieve this (the 1986 and 1988 Education Acts). The reform of school government represents a challenging expansion in consumer representation which, firstly, ought to be monitored by researchers as a 'social experiment' in its own right and, secondly, is likely to provide insights to understanding consumer representation and efforts at consumer empowerment generally.

State education is a prime example of publicly-provided collective consumption. With its public nature it combines characteristics of the free market to an increasing extent as a result of the extending of parental choice through the 1980, then the 1988, Education Acts. State education exhibits elements of both 'individual consumer choice' and 'collective public provision' within its workings. It is, therefore, fruitful territory in which to explore the study's theme and models of consumer empowerment. Finally, education is (and is seen to be) of fundamental importance for the development of the person (however we may define what constitutes desirable personal development). It has been put this way:

What we believe about education implicates our beliefs about everything else. The ends and means of education must be seen in relation to the ultimate problems of life...Whereas, from one point of view education is a specialized study, with its own techniques, and is the business of experts, from another point of view education is everyone's business and involves everything that living itself involves (Jeffreys 1950: 3).

This suggests, again, that education represents a service where the narrow notion of consumer is likely to be stifling and where the need for a more expansive concept will be particularly evident (though education is not unique in this). Choice of school education is not a simple exercise in which the consumer is easily able to match (and express) his or her goals to the producer (ie.the school) most likely to achieve them. This complexity is illustrated by the research on parental choice (eg Adler *et al.* 1989; Johnson 1990; Petch 1986; Stillman and Maychell 1986).

Overview of Study's Development and Method

The topic - consumer representation in school government - constitutes a kind of case study in relation to the broader theme. It provides a specific subject area in which the concerns of that theme can be explored. As explained above, the essential aim of the study is to develop and utilise an ideal type which, it is proposed, will better 'fit' the role and position of public service users than the notion of the consumer. The exploration of the topic area *as a whole* acts as a specific case in which to examine

this proposition by translating the theoretical construct (the ideal type) into indicators for which empirical data can be collected.

The approach during the early stages of the study can broadly be characterised as the generation of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1968) - broadly, because this generation has been from grounds of experience as much as systematic empirical research. Development of the theoretical ideas was based not solely on social research, but also on the personal experience of working as an advocate of consumer representation and consumer rights, developing consumer participation, and lobbying for the advancement of the consumer interest, together with researches to assist this work in different sectors and services⁵. I used the insights gained in this work as 'springboards to systematic theorizing' (Glaser and Strauss 1968: 252).

Whilst it is valuable to make clear the basis for the generation of theoretical constructs, it is over-restrictive and unrealistic to insist that such a basis consists entirely (or mainly) of formal social research. There is much to be gained from the advice of C Wright Mills concerning intellectual craftsmanship, that 'you must learn to use your life experience in your intellectual work: continually to examine and interpret it' (Mills 1970: 216). Thus I sought to 'cast into types' (Mills 1970: 234) the initially-vague notions that suggested themselves during more than 10 years work in the field of consumer representation, the aim being to give these notions more systematic form and content so that they

⁵ see Appendix A

can assist our understanding of modern consumer society generally and specific phenomena within it.

This 'casting into types' began with an attempt to develop further a typology of participatory action originally suggested by Macbeth *et al.* (1980) - see Woods 1988b, 1989. At the same time, I began to think in terms of some form of conceptualisation of parents that built upon but went beyond their conception as consumers. This gave rise to the concept of the *consumer-citizen*, on which some rudimentary ideas were formulated in Woods 1988a. I carried out a postal (self-completion questionnaire) survey of parent governors in 1988 (the *1988 survey*) in order to test the extent to which the typology of participatory action reflected what parent governors believed participation on school government was about. Work on this data and further work on the theoretical constructions, ie the typology and the concept of the consumer-citizen, led me to conclude that the consumer-citizen concept should not be seen as separate from the typology⁶. For it to describe adequately the role and activities of parents it needed to incorporate the typology.

The ideal type of the consumer-citizen was then given a much sharper and more detailed focus. At the same time, models of consumer empowerment and associated consumer activities were developed as key parts of the conceptual framework which the ideal type represented.

⁶ This is discussed further in Appendix A.

Parent governors can be seen as being at the hub of a radical experiment in consumer representation. They are, in terms of the theoretical framework - the ideal type - that was developed as the study progressed, *consumer-citizen representatives*. To what extent do parent governors resemble the ideal type? This question is at the core of the empirical work reported in chapters 7 and 8. This empirical work is an attempt to translate the theoretically-constructed ideal type into a means of measuring putative consumer-citizens: the ideal type was used as the basis for formulating indicators of the extent to which parent governors in the survey appeared to resemble, through their views and perceptions, the posited ideal type. In this way, the ideal type was being used as a yardstick by which to measure a specific group of parents. Data on these indicators were drawn from the 1988 survey. However, parent governors - because of their representative role - are in a different relation to schooling than the generality of parents. Issues raised by the representative character of parent governors and their involvement in school decision-making are discussed in Chapter 5, and the methodology of the empirical work is detailed in Chapter 6.

As many as possible of the respondents in the 1988 survey were contacted in 1992 and again asked to fill in a self-completion questionnaire (the *1992 survey*). Thus the empirical research has aspects in common with longitudinal studies. There were three reasons behind the follow-up survey. Firstly, I wanted to see whether this group of parents had changed in terms of the ideal type. Had they moved away from or nearer to the ideal? Secondly, analysis of the data from the 1988 survey had

suggested a number of relationships and hypotheses: I wanted to find out if these would hold over time (and over a period during which major changes were being implemented in school government). Thirdly, I wanted to obtain fresh data on a set of indicators that had been devised in light of the theoretical developments since the 1988 survey.

2. THE CONSUMER

Sociological interest in the consumer has increased considerably in recent years (Berge 1990; Bocoock 1992; Warde 1990). It has accompanied the emergence of concern with postmodernist society and renewed interest in contemporary consumer culture (Staath and Turner 1988; Featherstone 1991). It has also occurred at a time when radical changes, such as privatisation of nationalised industries (as in the UK) and the collapse of state socialism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, might be seen as a victory for capitalism and the free market - and for the conceptualisation of individuals as consumers in the bulk, if not all, of their economic and social life.

Hall (1989) asserts that capital's

'global' expansion continues, with renewed energy..., to transform everything in its wake, subordinating every society and social relationship to the law of commodification and exchange value.

Whether the social, economic and political developments taking place in the industrialised and the former-communist worlds can be interpreted entirely as representing the onward march of capitalism is a moot point. There are changes underway (in relation to social class and gender, for example) which beg the question of whether we are witnessing a transformation of the ways in which people are differentiated and social life structured. In this chapter, certain of these changes, which appear most

closely to impinge upon the enhanced importance of consumption and people as consumers, are discussed. Definitions of the consumer are then explored, before addressing in turn the notions of collective consumption and consumer empowerment. In discussing consumer empowerment, attention is drawn to the positive and creative activities of consumers (which form an integral part of the empowerment models outlined in Chapter 3) and to the significance of the political dimension (state action, statutory rights, political participation, and so on) for consumer activity. This latter point leads to a discussion of the notion of citizenship as an alternative to the concept of the consumer. The chapter finishes by concluding that neither the concept of the consumer nor that of the citizen can alone adequately represent the relationship between public services and those who use, receive, pay for or indirectly benefit from them.

Context of Change

The focus here is on the changing social context within which consumption and people's role as consumers has come to have greater prominence. Particular attention is paid to social class, gender, the nature of urban living, and the scope for consumption.

The usefulness of *social class* as a means of understanding modern societies has been vigorously challenged over the last few years by social scientists writing from a variety of standpoints (Goldthorpe and Marshall 1992). Whilst the purpose here is not to review, still less to resolve, the numerous strands in this

debate, there are social changes taking place that underlie the challenges to social class and which provide the context in which concern with consumption has come to the fore in recent years. The nature of social class is changing. For example, there have been major changes in the occupational structure: employment (in the United Kingdom) in manufacturing declined between 1971 and 1990 from 8.1 million to 5.2 million, whilst jobs in services increased from 11.6 million to 15.9 million (this included within the services sector a doubling of employment in banking, finance and insurance to 2.7 million); also during the same period the number of self-employed (in Britain) increased by 60%, from 2 million to 3.2 million (Central Statistical Office 1992: 75, tables 4.10, 4.11).

Such changes have a significant impact on the class structure. Most clearly, we can see that there is a continuing decline in the the 'core working class' (manual workers in industry). The corollary of this is the growth of the 'middle class'. However, that does not necessarily represent a quantitative growth in the 'middle class' as a given social category. There are references to the 'new middle classes' (for example, Offe 1984) which - being in the plural - appear to reflect the heterogeneity of those who fall within it. These 'new middle classes' encompass service groups associated with the spread of bureaucracy, the growth of the welfare state and the recent rapid growth of service industries (Bradley 1992: 22). Others emphasise (within the 'new middle classes') the significance of an expansion of a distinctive service class, consisting of managers, professionals, educators, scientists, and so on (Lash and Urry 1987). Cooke describes the

changing social structure as coming to resemble an hourglass shape:

with a burgeoning service class, an attenuating working class and a burgeoning underclass of unemployed, subemployed and the 'waged poor' of part-time and/or casualized labour, classically found in fast food outlets and service stations (Cooke 1988: 485).

As the occupational structure alters, there are also arguments concerning the significance of social class as an explanatory factor in social analysis. Critics range from those who are extremely sceptical about its practical use in sociology (Pahl 1989; Holton and Turner 1989) to those who challenge the pre-eminence of class as an explanatory factor, but continue to allow it a place alongside other factors. Evans, for example, argues that research evidence points to class affecting attitudes towards class-related issues (such as taxes on company profits) but not other attitudes, such as concern for those on welfare benefits (Evans 1992). Perhaps one of the most compelling indicators of a weakening of the importance of class is the trend in the 1980s amongst market researchers and advertisers to dispense with social class groupings and to develop new categories of consumer which better predict consumption patterns (Bocock 1992). Consumers are targeted by 'lifestyle, taste and culture rather than by the Registrar General's categories of social class' (Hall 1989: 118), the significance of this being (it might be argued) that the career prospects of advertisers and the like are more directly affected than those of social scientists by an ability to keep a

‘finger on the pulse’ of the population.

Goldthorpe and Marshall (1992) in their response to critics of class analysis make two points. Firstly, they distinguish between class analysis in its Marxist versions (which entail a theory of history and a conception of class conflict as an engine of social change) and class analysis as a research programme (in which the prime concern is to examine the importance of class, relative to other factors, in shaping life-chances and patterns of social action). Secondly, they seek to show - by means of a review of research on class mobility, education and political partisanship - that definitions of class are more than merely arbitrary and that class retains significant explanatory force in relation to differences in key areas of social life. Their argument is that class analysis as a research programme is amply justified. They conclude also:

A common theme in the research findings now accumulating is... that of stability rather than the dynamism of class relations. What is revealed is a remarkable persistence of class-linked inequalities and of class-differentiated patterns of social action, even within periods of rapid change at the level of economic structure, social institutions, and political conjunctures. Goldthorpe and Marshall 1992: 393)

This echoes Reid's conclusion a decade earlier, based on a review

of the empirical evidence concerning class differences in Britain:

it is difficult to escape from the realisation that the basic facts of class are very far from being dynamic. For those with investment or hope in change, the lack of change observed in areas where the rhetoric for equality abounds - like education and health - may be galling. Indeed there is some evidence to suggest that class differences in such areas may be widening.
(Reid 1981: 298-299)

The case for the persistence of class effects underlines the need to proceed with caution. Social class may be a (relatively) old concept in terms of the life of the social sciences, but it would be premature to regard it as a present-day irrelevance. Two things are clear. Firstly, the class structure is subject to major change as the economy and occupational structure evolve in the ways alluded to above. Secondly, over the last two decades, the importance attached to other groupings and social cleavages (such as gender and race) - and to the interaction between these (Bradley 1992; Maynard 1990) has grown.

We turn now to focus on *gender* as the social position and role of women has, arguably, a special relevance to consumption (we see below the extent to which this can be argued with). In British sociology, the serious and sustained treatment of gender issues can be dated from the early 1970s, since which time there has been an 'explosion' of research and publications (Maynard 1990: 269).

Women themselves have steadily increased their involvement in the economy. As a percentage of the economically active population, women increased to 41% in 1986 from 31% in 1951; more spectacular has been the rise in the proportion of married women working, to 53% in 1986 from 22% in 1951 (Webb 1989: 133). During the 1980s, there is evidence of more women gaining access to professions such as insurance and banking, town planning and personnel (Stratta and Reid 1989: 258). However, the overall trend represented by this increased economic activity is for women to be in jobs which are low status, low-paid and the least secure:

In 1987, 44 per cent of all female employees were in part-time work, with the inevitable loss of work-related benefits, compared to 8 per cent of male employees. Recent decline in manufacturing has affected women's employment opportunities even more than men's, with greater numbers having to move into lower-paid, service sector jobs; ethnicity, when combined with gender results in further depression of occupational status... Although women's pay, relative to men's, rose significantly between 1970 and 1977... a new stable differential has now emerged, with women on average earning 66 per cent of male earnings. It is difficult not to conclude that despite the advances made in educational qualifications, being a woman in the labour market is more likely to result in being used as a member of a reserve army of labour; a secondary sector of the labour force, characterized by

short-term and insecure employment, which paradoxically facilitates a rapid response to technological change (Stratta and Reid 1989: 259).

Whilst women's economic position is important, because of the differential access it gives to higher incomes and high status occupations, attention has also been drawn to the more fundamental difficulties that awareness of gender issues poses for class analyses of society. These include the assumption in much class analysis that women are dependent on men and that gender inequalities are less important than male class differences. One of the responses to these kinds of problems has been to propose that housewives (whether full-time or part-time) constitute a distinct class in relation to husbands, because of the relations of domestic production under which they work and their distinctive position in the labour market (Delphy 1977). Although there are difficulties in sustaining this thesis (for example, an unemployed, unmarried woman would appear to have no class position at all - see Maynard 1990 for a useful summary of the problems), it has the merit of focusing on a distinctive aspect of the work characteristic of many women. Unlike other kinds of work (voluntary work and paid employment) undertaken by women, housework, or responsibility for it, is common to virtually all women, this burden of responsibility persisting even in families that aim to break down traditional divisions of labour (Delamont 1980: 100-101). It also points to the particular relationship women have to spending and consumption. If most men and most children 'are serviced by wives and mothers so that they emerge into the world fed, clothed and pampered by someone else', or,

to use another terminology, if women are responsible for the reproduction of labour power (Delamont 1980: 101), then one can see how they are necessarily engaged in buying the bulk of items required for people's daily and domestic lives. Whether that constitutes *control* over that spending is another matter, as it begs the question of whether women are acting autonomously in their buying decisions or whether they are engaged in serving the preferences and priorities of others. Also, from the discussion below, it is apparent that the extent to which women have access to household income is not clear.

Awareness of gender can be linked to challenges to 'production-orientated' analyses of society and to arguments that, till recently, consumption (as opposed to production) has been given much less attention than it deserves. We might, rather crudely, characterise the conventional wisdom since the industrial revolution as attaching value and importance to the *male sphere of economic production*, whilst treating as secondary to this the *female sphere of family and consumption*. Nava compares cultural representations and theorizations of the (female) consumer and the (male) producer:

The activity of the consumer...is likely to be constructed as impulsive and trivial, as lacking agency, whereas the work of the producer, even if 'alienated', tends to be 'hard', 'real', dignified, a source of solidarity and a focus around which to organize politically. This is partly a consequence of the peculiar privileging of production within the economic sphere...but in the light of the fact that women

control 80 per cent of buying, it must also be interpreted as part of a wider misogynistic view of women's reason and capabilities. Indeed, the ridiculing of women shoppers may be a way of negotiating the anxiety aroused by their economic power in this sphere (Nava 1991: 162)

Over the past two decades, the approach of historians to the origins and development of industrial society has undergone a profound change. The emphasis on supply and changes in techniques of production has given way to a recognition that more attention is needed to understanding the demand side to market expansion and that the bulk of the population in early and pre-industrial society were consumers of market goods (Campbell 1987; Shamma 1990). More and more, work on contemporary culture views consumption and the activity of the consumer in positive terms: it highlights people's critical skills in reading advertisements, their capacity to create styles and to use them as forms of protest or signals of identity, and (drawing on psychoanalysis) the complex nature of consumption which provides new insights into the pleasures and benefits to be derived from commodities such as sound systems and computers (Nava 1991).

If consumption is seen as of greater importance and in a more positive light, in what way might this lead to a revaluation of women's role as consumers? A study which attempts to explain the rise of modern consumerism - the necessary complement to increasing industrial production - identifies a special, indeed vital, role for women. They (particularly middle class women) are

identified as carriers of the 'romantic ethic', a crucial element in explaining the rise of modern consumerism. This ethic is characterised by imaginative pleasure-seeking and day-dreaming and its development is associated with the rise of the novel and the cult of romantic love in the eighteenth century. It legitimises the restless search for novelty, providing the demand which new productive techniques are able to meet. This 'romantic ethic' is contrasted with the 'Protestant ethic' (associated with capitalism and with masculinity) and the prominence of women is noted

among the readers of romantic and sentimental fiction in the eighteenth century, something which has remained true for the genre down to the present day; whilst many of the activities identified as most compatible with romantic values - notably education, child-care, welfare work and, to a degree, the fine arts - have all traditionally been regarded as 'women's work' (Campbell 1987: 224).

As a result, women are bearers of an ethic and an approach to living which is essential for the development and continuance of industrial society. They provide a source of legitimation for 'modern hedonism', a 'permanent desiring mode' in which the discrepancy between dream and reality gives rise to a 'continuing longing, from which specific desires repeatedly spring' (Campbell 1987: 95). This is in tension with the rationality of calculation, experiment, science and technology, and with the puritanism of the 'Protestant ethic', but 'it is upon this that the dynamism of the West ultimately depends' (Campbell 1987: 227):

There are difficulties with Campbell's argument. The stress placed on romanticism as the characterising element of 'longing', 'day-dreaming' and what he refers to as 'modern hedonism' precludes rationality. However, consumption can be characterised as a rational process. The consumer can be seen as seeking (through inspection, comparison and analysis of relevant information) to match his or her needs and preferences to available goods and services. Equally, recognising the cultural importance of consumer goods, their consumption and use as a means of excluding other groups can be seen as a rational strategy for gaining or affirming power (Douglas and Isherwood 1979: 89). Campbell's argument is valuable in focusing on the unique element in the development of consumer demand which could sustain indefinite growth, but it does not allow questions to be asked concerning the extent to which consumption is rational calculation. Consumption is a complex phenomenon and can be both rational and irrational (Nava 1991). To what extent, for example, do the 'romantic' and 'rational' aspects of consumption vary over time, or between people and between social groupings? With regard to gender, can all middle class women be characterised as carriers of the 'romantic ethic'? To what extent are they, or have they been in the past, rational and puritanical in their values and their behaviour as consumers?

There is also the question (broached earlier) of what power women have to affect the consumption patterns of households. In her study of the pre-industrial consumer, Shamma admits to the difficulties of proving the extent of women's power over expenditure, even in relation to the domestic environment

(Shammas 1990: 180-1, 298). In contemporary Britain, it appears clear that women are responsible for a considerable proportion of consumer expenditure. Most purchases of food, clothing, footwear, household and chemist goods, and consumer durables are made by women who, it is estimated, are responsible for up to 90% of sales (by volume) and over half in terms of value (Scott 1976:ix-x).

Relatively little is known about contemporary distribution of income within households. There are indications that it varies according to stages in the lifecycle, household income and geographic region: in particular, the wife is more likely to be the 'family banker' in lower income households and is much more likely to be responsible for spending on necessities such as food than disposal of any surplus (Kidd 1989: 86-94). The increase in one-parent households (mostly involving mothers) over the last 20 years could well increase the extent to which women are in a position to control expenditure (though it has to be acknowledged that most one-parent families are living at or below the poverty line) (Family Policy Studies Centre 1990).

All of this points to the relationship between women and consumption being complex and only partially understood. The fact that women as a group spend considerable sums of money, and can be readily seen doing this in shops throughout the country, provides surface credibility for the view that they control that spending and, thereby, influence production. The inequalities that exist in gender relations clearly indicate, however, that much (though not necessarily all) of this control

over consumption is apparent rather than genuine.

Women's influence as consumers of services provided by the state may be less than in relation to private consumption. Services such as the welfare benefits system, state education, public health services, and so on are of immense importance to women's lives. However, women are greatly under-represented in positions of political power and in the elites who control various aspects of social life. They help to sustain the prevailing order through voluntary efforts and thus 'form the backbone of the systems of social control in modern Britain... [but] ...they are quietly but firmly excluded from participating in them at any but the lowest levels' (Delamont 1980: 158). Whilst there has been some progress in political participation during the 1980s (for example, increasing numbers of women appointed or elected to public office), it appears that overall there has been no significant gain (Stratta and Reid 1989: 260). This suggests that women's interests are less likely to be represented directly by themselves and to influence decisions made concerning services that are collectively provided.

We now turn to the changes in *urban life* that are occurring under the impact of shifts in the occupational, class and economic structure (manifested most dramatically in the demise of traditional heavy industries such as coal and steel). The impact that these have on working class urban areas is marked:

The costs of industrial change are borne by local working class communities. These communities grew up

in response to the demand for labour from new industries, yet over time changes in these industries have destroyed their original role. The decline of each area's traditional industrial structure sets off a chain reaction of economic and social consequences, undermining every aspect of life in the local community (Community Development Project 1977, quoted in Rees 1980: 191).

Sociological interest in community studies has declined markedly since the 1960s (Dickens 1990: 123) and it is difficult to construct an overall assessment of how Britain's urban communities have changed. There is evidence of major population shifts. Whilst populations in the major cities were either static or growing in the 1950s, they began to decline in the 1960s and 1970s, and this decline affects not only the inner cities but many suburban areas. This represents

a centrifugal movement from cities to surrounding satellite towns and rural areas. There has indeed been a spectacular renaissance of rural areas, beginning, it seems, between 1966 and 1971. Growing population rather than 'rural depopulation' is now a general feature of such areas (Lash and Urry 1987: 100).

As cities spread outwards and 'a mosaic of specialized and carefully designed urban and rural areas sprawls over vast tracts of space', the question of what constitutes a town or city nowadays becomes itself an interesting question (Thrift 1989:51).

It might reasonably be hypothesised that such communities have continued to move along Frankenburg's rural-urban continuum, displaying more of the features characteristic of the urban end of that continuum. These features include economic diversity, specialisation and a highly developed division of labour; greater orientation to the values of the wider society; and the need to *achieve* status rather than it being *ascribed* by social or family position (Frankenburg 1969: 288-289). More recently, writers concerned with postmodernism have postulated the 'postmodern city'. Descriptions vary. In one version, it succeeds premodern city cultures ('sedimented in tradition, history and the arts, housing famous buildings and landmarks which provide a strong sense of place and collective identity') and the 'modernist functional economic city whose spatial form is dominated by the grid-iron layout and high-rise modernist architecture': the successor, the postmodern city, is:

much more image and culturally self-conscious; it is both a centre of cultural consumption and general consumption, and the latter... cannot be detached from cultural signs and imagery, so that urban lifestyles, everyday life and leisure activities themselves in varying degrees are influenced by the postmodern simulational tendencies (Featherstone 1991: 99).

In another version, the postmodern city (exemplified by London and Los Angeles) is conceived as a 'degraded' form of urbanity, characterised by ethnically divided masses, a massive redistribution of income, increasingly enclosed and isolated

urban spatial structures, and the 'unemployment, sub-employment and environmental decay of the superexploited poor' (Cooke 1988: 490-491).

One of the problems in assessing the extent to which urban Britain has come to resemble a postmodern culture is that there is no agreed meaning to the term 'postmodern' (Featherstone 1991). Another, which impinges on all attempts to describe and understand the recent history of urban communities, is the paucity of adequate research evidence concerning their development over the last two decades or so. There has been interest in recent years in reviving community studies and some work on 'localities' has been undertaken (Dickens 1990: 123; Cooke 1988; Cooke 1989 - see Duncan 1989 for a useful critique of the term 'locality'). However, the detailed, locally-focused work has not been done in order to answer the stark sociological questions which Featherstone rightly emphasises need to be broached - questions such as where postmodern lifestyles (given agreement on what these are) take place and how many people from which range of groups participate and for how long (Featherstone 1991: 105).

Underlying these various perspectives on urban change is a continuing trend which involves the further loosening of community ties - at least the loosening of such ties in forms which have been familiar. The impact is apparent particularly with young people who, argues Willis (1990), are less likely to be involved in institutions (such as trade unions, community associations, churches, and so on) which fostered class identities.

Stable community life, whether rural or urban, can be seen as a residual culture fundamentally at odds with the modern dominant culture which is 'steeped in the idea of progress, change, challenge to though not total rejection of the past, self-emancipation, social reform, inter-generational improvement and material well-being' (Cooke 1990: 37). Its manifestations - the welfare state, modernizing nationalized industries, affluence - deprive 'such communities of the social energy which they had generated in forming and maintaining their own institutions' (Cooke 1990: 40). Cooke suggests, however, that it is possible to discern a revival of localism in new forms, such as co-operative tendencies in post-Fordist business organizations and local initiatives aimed at creating employment opportunities (Cooke 1990: 180).

An integral part of the social changes relating to social class, gender and urban living is an increase in what I term the *scope for consumption*. This consists of two elements. The first of these has already been alluded to: the complementary growth of consumer demand and of industrial production. This involves large and sustained increases in income and state expenditure over a long period of time, with which people are able to purchase goods and services. If we focus on the years since World War Two, the growth in income and consumption was such in the leading Western nation (the United States) that it was characterised as the 'affluent society' (Galbraith 1968). In the United Kingdom, between 1951 and 1971 personal disposable income (at 1963 prices) increased by almost two-thirds; between 1971 and 1990, real disposable income per head grew by nearly

three-quarters and consumers' expenditure in real terms by almost 70% (Central Statistical Office 1972: 84 - table 32; Central Statistical Office 1992: 90 - table 5.2, 105 - chart 6.1). Of course, participation in this growth was not shared equally. The gap between the highest and lowest paid has widened since 1971 and households on the lowest incomes spend a higher proportion (a half) than other households on essentials such as food, housing and fuel (Central Statistical Office 1992: 92 - table 5.6, 107 - table 6.3).

It is worth re-emphasising that growth in income and production are not of themselves sufficient explanation of increased consumption. The search for an additional component to that explanation is what led to the thesis of the 'romantic ethic' mentioned earlier. Equally, poverty does not necessarily preclude participation in the consumption of new consumer goods (Shammas 1990). Nevertheless, people's scope for consumption increases the more disposable income they have. The social impact of affluence was the subject of the study of the 'affluent worker' in the 1960s. Affluence was associated with a way of life which was more home-centred and displayed a 'marked consumer orientation' involving the purchase and use of more consumer goods, such as cars, refrigerators and other goods characteristic (till then at least) of middle class homes (Goldthorpe *et al.* 1969:39)

The second element in the increased scope for consumption concerns the growth in state activity and publicly provided services. In Britain, non-military state expenditure grew from less

than 10% of Gross National Product in the eighteenth century to almost 30% by 1980 (McGrew 1992: 76). The scope, and demand, for collective provision of services such as health, education, and social security increased at the same time as production, private consumption and household incomes grew. The numbers who now make use of these services is accordingly large: for example, new out-patient attendances (UK) and in-patients (England, Scotland and Northern Ireland) at National Health Service hospitals amounted to 24 million and 8.5 million respectively in the year 1989-1990; almost 10 million people were on state retirement pensions and over 4 million on income support in Britain in 1989-1990 and more than 8 million pupils were attending state schools in the UK in 1990 (Central Statistical Office 1992: 138 - table 7.32, 137 - table 7.31, 93 - table 5.8, 94 - table 5.9, 53 - table 3.5).

Thus in post-World War Two Britain, there developed both greater emphasis on private consumption, as represented by the affluent worker, *and* a dramatic growth in collective consumption.

Distant state control of welfare and educational services contrasts with locally-based provision which vibrant communities are able to sustain (Cooke 1990: 39-40), as it also contrasts with the market relations which characterise private consumption. Later in this chapter, we turn to a more detailed consideration of the notion of collective consumption as it is important to developing our understanding of the theme of this study: the relationship between public services and those who use, receive,

pay for or indirectly benefit from them.

The developments highlighted above - focusing on class, gender, urban life and the scope for consumption - indicate some of the major changes which constitute the context within which we are seeking to understand that relationship. Some perceive in this flow of change the 'triumph of signifying culture' (Featherstone 1991: 83) and the dissolution of past social divisions, power relations and cultures. Baudrillard conceives of consumption as a process in which it is not the material aspect of the consumed which is important, but the signs or symbols that they represent and the identity they construct for the person. As Baudrillard's work has progressed the signs have increasingly been seen as taking on a life of their own and the emphasis on class divisions affecting consumption has disappeared (Kellner 1989).

It is essential to recognise the importance of the symbolic in consumption and the fact that consumption cannot be understood without attention to the meanings associated with that which is consumed. This is not the same, however, as attaching no importance to social divisions and cleavages. Douglas and Isherwood develop a theory of consumption in which consumption is 'the very arena in which culture is fought over and licked into shape' and decisions are made about who is included and who excluded - for example, from the home, from sharing food, drink, music, conversation, and so on (Douglas and Isherwood 1979: 57). Bourdieu (1984) analyses how groups differentiate themselves from one another by patterns of consumption. Lash and Urry see the kinds of changes discussed in this section as 'an array of

interconnected processes which disorganize or literally deconstruct social and political life in modern Britain', a 'disorganized capitalism' in which ultimately '[a]ll that is solid about organized capitalism, class, industry, cities, collectivity, nation-state, even the world, melts into air'. Even so, they are at pains to emphasise that for the moment '[u]nlike the post-industrial commentators we think that capitalist social relations continue to exist' (Lash and Urry 1987: 99, 7). Featherstone warns against the 'seductively oversimplified postmodern story' and the continuing force of 'classification, hierarchy and segregation within the city' (Featherstone 1991:110).

The phenomenon of mass consumption - both private and collective - has emerged as a pervasive cultural activity in the latter half of the twentieth century. This has occurred as longstanding ties (to class, to local communities, to perceived traditions, and so on - what might be termed the 'old order') have continued to loosen (if not unravel altogether), as the question of identity has become more problematic, as the propensity (and ability) to buy consumer goods has grown and the demand (and political will) for public services has been sustained at extremely high levels (relative to earlier periods). As a result of these changes, interest in private consumption as a social and cultural phenomena has burgeoned. It would be rash, however, to view such consumption as a force rendering all past cleavages irrelevant. Consumption can be about many things: affirmation of achieved status, proclamation of aspired status, communication of belonging to or rejection of a social grouping, a conforming to cultural norms or declaration of a challenge to

given values and cultures. In short, consumption patterns can work to preserve existing divisions and hierarchies as much as they can be used to challenge them and forge new 'lifestyles'.

Compared with private consumption, the processes, meaning and importance of collective consumption are neglected. Collective consumption is not seen as part of the 'cutting edge' of new ways of constituting social life in modern 'consumer society'. Yet, consumer activity in relation to collectively-provided services is, as we have seen, widely experienced and involves huge amounts of productive and financial resources. Bearing this in mind, we turn now to the question of defining the consumer, before considering the nature of collective consumption in greater detail.

Defining the Consumer

The advance for capital, free markets and the conceptualisation of people as consumers (referred to at the beginning of this chapter) provides a powerful context for publicly provided education systems. Yet in exploring how education may be viewed from a consumer perspective, the terminology and assumptions of the free market cannot be 'transplanted' into a state service. Difficulties involved in introducing or enhancing markets and choice within state school systems, as well as possible benefits, have been given much attention recently both in the UK and other countries (Ball 1990b; Brown 1991; Goldring 1991; Glatter, Johnson and Woods 1993). Specifically, conceiving those who use and benefit from education as consumers is a contentious issue.

There are differing responses to the term 'consumer'. For example, Sallis, perhaps the most well-known and respected advocate of parental involvement in the UK, has criticised consumerism in school education in forthright terms. She asks: 'Surely we are all consumers of education?' (Sallis 1988: 18-22). Macbeth (1990: 14) suggests it may be helpful to regard the pupil as the consumer of education and parents as the legal clients of the school system. Reynolds (1989: 178-179), in attempting to set out a socialist educational policy, refers to the need to give 'local accountability to consumers', thus accepting a key aspect of Conservative education policy and the need for 'consumer-led educational policies'.

What is meant by the term 'consumer'? Often the 'consumer' is equated with the purchaser of goods and services in the private market, the most readily accessible model or ideal type for this view being the supermarket customer. Indeed, the origin of the term in its modern form lies in the embryonic industrialising market economy of the eighteenth century in which 'the acts of making and of using goods and services were newly defined in the increasingly abstract pairings of producer and consumer, production and consumption' (Williams 1981: 78). Marsland (1990:5) attempts a narrow definition which seeks to restrict the use of the term to situations in which genuine free markets exist. He suggests that the specific and necessary conditions for such situations are:

- genuine choice between two or more alternative suppliers

- suppliers competing in a market which is genuinely free
- competition in terms of price and quality which is measured by profit and loss, success and failure, on the part of suppliers.

Without these conditions there are only 'sullen, dissatisfied subjects of bureaucratic monopoly machinery'.

The kind of definition exemplified by Marsland's is, however, just too restrictive. Use of the term 'consumer' has been extended from its origins in the market economy to the public arena (Williams 1981: 79). People use and enjoy (and are frustrated and disappointed with) publicly provided services as they do private goods and services. There are private monopolies and there are public services that have to compete (with public and/or private) suppliers. Even a public service which comes close to being an effective monopoly for many people, such as the National Health Service (or state education), requires choices to be made by its consumers - for example, whether and how to seek medical help, which doctor to use, which educational course to take, and so on.

A more satisfactory definition is given by the National Consumer Council which, since its inception in 1975, has defined consumers in a broad sense to include 'the users of public and social services as well as the purchasers of commercial goods and services' (National Consumer Council 1977). The Council elaborates:

Our definition of a consumer is a broad one. As soon as children are faced with making choices of their own,

such as what to spend their money on, which shops to buy from, what sort of transport to use, which educational courses to follow, how to use their leisure, they are consumers. Thereafter, the consumer role becomes increasingly complex as the maturing young person and then the adult is obliged to choose and use more and more goods and services, public and private. Thus a patient in hospital, a library user, a commuter is just as much a consumer as a shopper for butter. An elderly person in a residential home is just as much a consumer as someone buying a washing machine. A consumer is someone who pays for goods and services in taxes, through the community charge and in professional fees, as well as across the counter. A consumer is someone whose choices, added to the choices of other consumers, determine the social cost of consumption and its impact on other sections of the community and on people in the world beyond (National Consumer Council 1989).

Most specialists in consumer affairs have adopted some form of the broader definition, though there are problems in drawing the line (Smith 1986). For example, should all environmental issues be seen as consumer issues, or does this make the definition so wide as to be meaningless? Smith goes on, in an attempt to resolve this:

Now clearly there are important differences between state/citizen and producer/customer relationships *but*

these are relatively unimportant to most people's perceptions of them... The politics of 'consumerism' is rooted primarily in perceived reality (how well does [a given product or service] work?) not in objective political economy (what is my relationship with the producer?) (Smith 1986: 2-3).

Smith then proposes what he sees as a more dynamic definition of consumerism:

Consumerism is the organised expression of the aspirations of the consumers and users of goods and services for *greater control over their immediate environment* [my emphasis] (Smith 1986: 3).

Collective Consumption

The development of the broader conception of the consumer is linked to the growth of a distinctive form of consumption known as 'collective consumption' (Castells 1977; Lojkine 1976; Hirschman 1982). The policy of privatisation in the UK since 1979 has been an attempt to 'roll back' the state (see, for example, Saunders and Harris 1990). However, despite this, state activity in areas such as health, education, social security and defence is massive and state influence in many other areas remains significant. In addition, privatisation does not mean complete withdrawal of governmental activity and intervention (Berge 1990:17-19 usefully discusses this point).

Intuitively, collective consumption can be seen as referring to the large and important activity of consumption which does not constitute relatively simple purchases of goods and services that are used (normally) by the individual or household. It is in a sense anything other than 'over the counter' sales or similar purchases. To get nearer the heart of the term, however, we need to recognise that what is termed collective consumption is concerned usually with goods and services (such as health services, education, housing, policing and social security) which are either of essential and/or profound importance for human and social life. These 'objects of consumption' have a deep significance for the culture and way of life of everyone.

However, this intuitive identification of collective consumption is inadequate. Other things are equally important for human life but are (ostensibly at least) part of the free market. Food is a key example. Another might be travel and the purchase and use of private cars. But giving collective consumption a definition which is both adequate and unambiguous is difficult. Provision by the state might be used as a defining element. Castells defines collective consumption as consumption:

whose economic and social treatment, whilst remaining capitalist, takes place not through the market but through the state apparatus (Castells 1977: 460).

On the other hand, Lojkin sees the collective aspect as the key

feature, ie the way in which the good or service is consumed:

the mode of consumption is collective and is thus by its nature opposed to individual, private appropriation. Parks or lessons cannot be consumed individually - at least not in their current increasingly socialized form (Lojkine 1976: 122).

There are, however, problems with each of these definitions. Castells' suffers from a certain arbitrariness as it depends entirely on the extent of state provision. States vary over time and between themselves with regard to their involvement in service provision, and whether a particular service is state-provided or not does not necessarily affect the nature of its consumption. For example, the way a museum is used could be unaffected by whether it is privately or state owned. Pahl puts it this way:

Are roads, parks, housing and leisure facilities *inherently* facilities which must be collectively controlled? Surely not: turnpike or toll roads were once common and could become widespread again. Parks, zoos, beaches and mountains may be privately owned... Clearly, the nationalisation of privately-owned leisure facilities such as bingo halls or amusement parks would neither increase nor decrease the means of collective consumption (Pahl 1977:168-169).

Lojkine's definition also presents difficulties as a good or service is not inherently collective or inherently private in the way it is used. Education, for example, can be consumed collectively at

school or privately at home. Similarly, the consumption of food and drink can be a collective or social affair, or a solitary habit.

As a consequence of the difficulties, Pahl rejects the concept of collective consumption as meaningless:

What is the precise distinction between the personal and the collective consumption of any facility? It cannot be the cost of the facility, it cannot be the nature of the facility, it cannot be the ownership of the facility or the way it is used. If we cannot define a collective mode of consumption, how can we continue to use the term meaningfully? (Pahl 1977: 122)

Saunders accepts Pahl's criticism of Lojkine but insists that his criticism of Castells is misplaced because Pahl appears to ignore the key role of the state in politicising urban crises:

It is entirely consistent, therefore, for Castells to argue that collective consumption, defined as those facilities provided by the state on account of their unprofitability, has qualitatively different political effects from individual consumption via the market (Saunders 1979: 123).

Saunders therefore accepts the definition of collective consumption as 'the collective provision of socially necessary facilities - facilities which aid the reproduction of labour-power'. But this definition, which relies for its significance on the *effects* of its defining element rather than its *nature*, remains to my mind

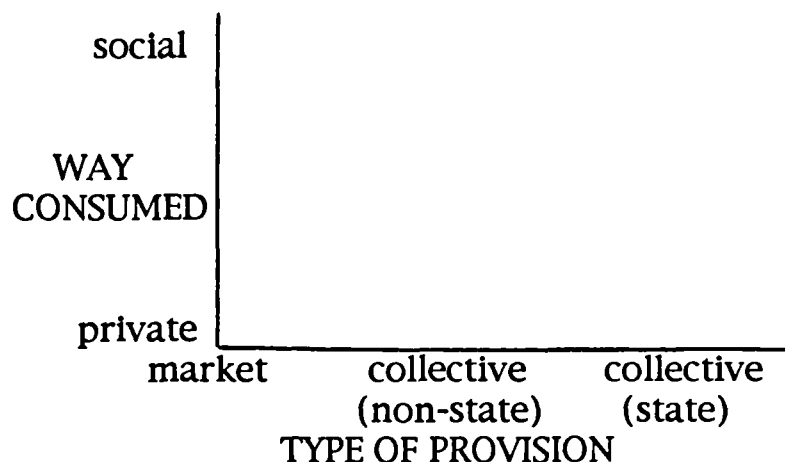
unsatisfactory for the following reasons:

- Lojkin does highlight a significant feature - namely, the way in which a facility is consumed. The extent to which consumption is or is not a social event is important.
- The point stands that facilities, under Castells' definition, can be arbitrarily re-defined by Government decision, though our intuitive sense of the collective and/or socially significant nature of such facilities need not be affected.
- State ownership is not the only means of state influence. For example, de-nationalisation may institute private ownership but state regulation (as with the telecommunications, gas and water industries in the UK) can remain as a significant influence. Other industries, such as bus services, may rely heavily on state funding.
- There are other forms of collective action (at local, regional and national levels) besides state intervention. These include the co-operative retail movement and housing associations.

Instead of trying to decide upon one defining element for collective consumption, the complex nature of the phenomenon requires a more sensitive approach. A first step is to express diagrammatically alternative defining elements as two connected axes (Figure 2.1). In this approach, a sharp definition is not used or sought. It is accepted that the nature of consumption can vary widely according to the criteria set out in Figure 2.1. Collective consumption consists broadly of those goods and services which can be plotted from the middle outwards of either or both of the two axes: in other words, goods and services which are consumed

socially and/or have a high measure of state or other collective intervention (which may or may not mean state ownership).

Figure 2.1: Two-dimensional representation of consumer activity



One of the merits of this approach is that it can incorporate state intervention in important products, such as food and telecommunications, which falls short of nationalisation. At the same time, it acknowledges variations within what are otherwise collectively consumed services: for example, children taught entirely at home (by parents or tutors not provided by the state) would be located towards the point where the axes meet and clearly identified as enjoying private consumption in this regard. In this way the fluidity and complexity of actual consumption is more readily reflected.

Although there has been a tendency in urban sociology more recently to turn its attention away from concerns with collective consumption (Dickens 1990: 104), it remains in my view an important and distinguishable aspect of consumer activity. The approach to it conceptualised in Figure 2.1 will be developed further in the discussion which follows on consumer empowerment.

Consumer Empowerment and the Range of Consumer Activity

Smith's definition of the consumer, mentioned above, related notions of the consumer and consumerism to the issue of empowerment. Awareness of people's roles as consumers is bound up with a perception of their vulnerability and weakness in the face of producers, bureaucracies and political decision-makers: 'Consumerism is about the redistribution of power in the economic and political market-place' (Ramsay 1989: 12). The past 35 years in the UK have seen the establishment of bodies intended to protect, represent and inform consumers (such as the Consumers' Association, Office of Fair Trading and National Consumer Council) and the enactment of measures (the Trade Descriptions Act 1968, Consumer Credit Act 1974, and so on) aimed at giving consumers certain legal protections in their transactions with producers (Smith 1986: 8-9) . These (largely, but by no means exclusively, government-inspired) initiatives were not aimed only at the private market. For example, community health councils were set up in 1977 to represent patients' interests in relation to health authorities. By the 1980s, public service managers were having to face up to consumerism and the need to be responsive to consumers as a pressing requirement of public policy (Pollitt 1988; Rhodes 1987):

'consumerism' has... become an officially-approved fashion. In hospitals, schools, housing schemes, advice and information services and many other aspects of public administration managers are being exhorted to

pay more attention to consumer wishes, offer consumers wider choice, and develop techniques for 'marketing' their particular service (Pollitt 1987: 43).

Addressing public service managers, Potter pinpoints a question crucial to all attempts to protect, and make producers more responsive to, consumers:

The final and most crucial issue concerns power. How far do you want to redress the imbalance of power that exists between providers and users or citizens? (Potter 1988: 163)

The answer must surely be that the balance of power only shifts significantly if those holding most power have compelling reasons to bring about, or acquiesce in, that shift - or if power is taken from them.

But we need to understand a lot more about what is meant by consumer empowerment and 'greater control'. The notion of empowerment is being increasingly drawn upon. This is particularly evident in relation to debates about citizenship and the future of radical and socialist thinking. Such debates refer to: 'enabling us to develop our individual potential to the full' (Blair 1992); changing the 'locus of power' by developing new levers of power and putting them 'into the hands of as many citizens as possible, so that individuals can wherever necessary use effective means outside the market to pursue their aspirations' (Meacher 1992a; see also Meacher 1992b); the failure of 'postwar liberals

and social democrats' to empower ordinary citizens so that they could 'punish incompetence or unresponsiveness in the state bureaucracies' (Ignatieff 1991:31). However, there are appeals too from the right of the political spectrum to the goal of empowering people (Green 1991).

These conceptions of empowerment emphasise the powers and rights of the individual person. Whilst not everyone would accept what from a socialist perspective is a shift to an individual-orientation away from notions of collective power and rights, it is accepted in terms of this study as the proper focus of empowerment. I have sought a definition of empowerment which expresses the essence of the notion and which is as neutral as possible, ie one that does not contain presuppositions about the aims and values which give purpose and direction to personal empowerment. I have drawn upon, in part, Weber's classic definition of power (Gerth & Mills 1970: 180). Empowerment is defined as *increased opportunities for the person to realise his or her own will*.

It is important not to conceive of the consumer as an isolated individual, ie without history, culture, relationships and material circumstances which help to forge what he or she believes in, wishes for, and so on. We are not 'independent individuals' (Marx 1973: 83-85). Such a conception of man as a social being, to be understood in a social context, is of course at the very root of sociological analysis.

Having said that, this does not mean that individuals must be

seen as an 'end-product', completely malleable under pressure of historical and social forces, an *effect* whose nature is entirely sought in *social causes*. This perception that the individual person is capable of a measure of what might be termed 'free will' and is thus more than a social product is characteristic of different sociological traditions. It is found in Durkheim's work (Nisbet 1970: 160-161) and in Marx's (see below). In the Weberian tradition, reason, freedom and the transcending potential of charismatic action have been identified as important within the context of a sociological understanding of people (Mills 1970: 183-195; Gerth and Mills 1970:73). Giddens (1976: 84-85, 154) prefers the term 'agent causality' to 'freedom', which entails accepting that people's actions result from reasons (or 'an agent's reflexive monitoring of his intentions in relation to both his wants and his appreciation of the demands of the 'outer' world') and recognising 'that 'objective' causal conditions that influence human action can in principle be recognised by men, and thus incorporated into that action *in such a way as to transform it*' (my emphasis).

An opposing view is that individualism represents the swapping of one form of social control for another (Jones 1990: 81). The work of Foucault, for example, serves to alert us to the ways by which people are constrained by power relations which are mediated through 'discourse' - which is concerned not only with the words and concepts used, but also with 'who can speak, when, and with what authority' (Ball 1990: 2). Foucault emphasises the subjection of individuals to the accumulated power of the state and pays little attention to how this may be

resisted. Nevertheless, even in his analysis there is a belief that people are 'much freer than they feel' and that 'to change something in the mind of people' so they do not accept as truth that which is handed down to them is the role of the intellectual (Ball 1990a: 1-2).

The perspective underlying this study conceives of individuals as in a dialectical relationship with the social, both formed by it and forming it. Giddens (1976: 120-121) introduced the notions of 'structuration' and the 'duality of the structure' in order to encapsulate this perception of people and the social structures in which they live, these structures being 'both constituted *by* human agency, and yet at the same time..[being]..the very *medium* of this constitution'. My perspective thus accepts that the individual is capable of creativity, ie of activity and thought which constitute aspects of the world in which they live. Integral to this perspective is the notion that there is an end (or ends) of transcending worth to which people may aspire and towards which progress can be made. This end may be described in terms of freedom - freedom to create, to develop, to fulfill oneself, to utilise one's powers of reason (though other terms could be used). Many questions are begged of course. How can you know that this is a goal of transcending worth? What is the nature of freedom? Is it found 'within' (development of the soul) or 'without' (in a community or personal relationships, for example)? And there are many, many more questions which have been the subject of philosophical analysis, discussion and dispute since, at least, the time of classical Greek philosophy. The definition of empowerment does not presume any particular

answer to these questions. It does presuppose, however, that the ultimate (worldly) authority to answer these lies with the individual person himself or herself. This is most likely to be realised in the context of social and economic arrangements which are conducive to personal empowerment (and in modern industrial society a large measure of this empowerment is concerned with the empowerment of people in their role as consumers).

Marx, in the Grundrisse particularly, expresses something of the complexity of the notion of the individual which is necessarily immersed in and heavily influenced by the social, yet is not imprisoned for all time by that. The 'fully developed individual' to which Marx refers is the product of history and exists as a potential which human beings have yet to realise (Marx 1973: 161-2,410,542). Looking towards this future development, he writes:

...when the limited bourgeois form is stripped away, what is wealth other than the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces etc, created through universal exchange? The full development of human mastery over the forces of nature, those of so-called nature as well as humanity's own nature? The absolute working-out of his creative potentialities, with no presuppositions other than the previous historic development, which makes this totality of development ie the development of all human powers as such the end in itself, not as measured on a

predetermined yardstick? Where he does not produce himself in one specificity, but produces his totality? Strives not to remain something he has become, but is in the absolute movement of becoming? (Marx 1973: 488)

The individual has been seen as an important theme in discussions concerning postmodern society (though others have identified postmodernism with the 'disappearance of the possessive self and rugged individuality' - Stauth and Turner 1988: 520). It has been argued that '[t]he Left should counterpose a democratic individualism against Thatcherism's consumer individualism' (Leadbeater 1989: 145). The two 'individualisms' counterposed to each other by Leadbeater are a useful pointer to how we might conceive of the individual/consumer as a dynamic concept containing both tensions and unrealised potential:

The Left should build its vision of how society should be organised from an alternative account of individualism, an appeal to a culture of individual citizenship rather than individual consumerism.

The choice the Left should offer is between Thatcherism's constrained, narrow, materialistic individualism, and an expansive individualism which offers people rights to influence decisions in production as well as in consumption; political and civil rights as well as the right to buy; access to a set of universal rights to health care, education and training (Leadbeater 1989: 137-138).

But the concept of the participating individual ('democratic individualism') is not a preserve of Marxism or the 'left' (just as the notion of empowerment is not). For example, Berger, writing from a perspective explicitly seeking to be free of the 'ideological camps' of capitalism and communism, highlights (in the form of one of his theses on social policy) the importance of people themselves helping to define their situations:

Those who are the objects of policy should have the opportunity to participate not only in specific decisions but in the definitions of the situation on which these decisions are based. This may be called cognitive participation (Berger 1977: 13).

In 1959 C Wright Mills (1970:184-195) attempted to develop an explicitly postmodern social theory¹. Mills was concerned very much with the limits and possibilities of the individual in what he termed the postmodern period or 'Fourth Epoch', but saw in this epoch the values of freedom and reason under threat. He posed this question as a fundamental one: 'among contemporary men will there come to prevail, or even to flourish, what may be called The Cheerful Robot?' - by which he meant 'alienated man' predominating over its antithesis of the free, reasoning individual in a democratic society. It is useful to remind ourselves that social theories about postmodernism need not carry or be associated with any particular ideological baggage, and that the

¹ pre-dating the French writers who are credited elsewhere as being the first (Kellner 1988:242)

auguries for people as free actors, as participators, as influencers of events, are not seen as necessarily favourable.

It may not be right, however, to envisage only two choices, between the passive consumer and the democratic individual. It needs to be asked if the two individualisms posited by Leadbeater are indeed *opposed* individualisms; or, to put it another way, what *relationship* there is between them. Are they discrete alternatives, to be compared and chosen one between the other? It is undoubtedly more complex than this. Consumers are not necessarily passive for one thing: they can be critical, thoughtful, active, complaining. Bowlby puts it this way:

The consumer represented as the mindless credit-card junkie or the helpless victim of 'subliminal' techniques is a rather different subject from the one construed as a savvy selector of the cheapest toothpaste or the best school for his child (Bowlby 1990: 5).

Consumers are, in various ways, active in influencing, altering or adapting goods or services. This should not be taken to imply that consumers are characteristically influential over, or in control of, what they consume. The point here is to highlight those ways in which consumers *can and sometimes do* exert influence and play an active and creative part in the process of consumption. Some of these ways are outlined below.

Consumer purchasing power: Consumers can use their power to buy or not to buy in order to alter suppliers' policies and

practices. They can do this through their *individual purchasing decisions* which signal to producers whether consumers are satisfied or not with what they produce. This is the consumers' role in the classic market economy. Individual purchasing decisions need not only or mainly be informed by notions of personal or family satisfaction, but also by awareness of social and environmental factors (Ekins 1989). Consumers can *consciously as a group use their economic power*, through the use or threat of boycotts for example. Nava (1991) has outlined developments in what she terms the 'new consumer activism' and the 'new democracy of the market place' and demonstrates that this is a phenomenon worthy of further exploration.

Consumer work: Consumers can work on goods and services, modifying or transforming them in the process. Some products *require* a significant amount of activity on the part of the consumer in order to be consumed. Food which has to be prepared and cooked and D-I-Y goods are two examples (an interesting review of the complexities and potential for further sociological study of food consumption is given by Beardsworth and Keil 1990). Such activity can involve both consumers and producers. Urry observes that:

converting a range of tourist services into a satisfactory 'holiday' involves a great deal of 'work'. This work involves both the [holiday] grouping itself [eg the family or couple] determined to have a 'good time', and it involves those selling the services who... try to guarantee a particular holiday experience (Urry 1990: 25).

In the context of school education, Macbeth (1989: 6-7) has stressed that parents (with teachers) are 'inescapably' the co-educators, of children - 'whether that suits our professional preferences or not'.

It is important to recognise that consumption is not necessarily a single act. Consumption can occur over a period of time, involving distinguishable phases (gaining access to the good or service, enjoyment of it, and so on) and transformative work which is often 'informal, voluntary or domestic' (Warde 1992). Consumers thus may re-work and create new meanings for products, customising cars being an example (Featherstone 1983: 7). At a theoretical level, Miller (1987: 190,196) refers to the 'recontextualization' of the product,

... a long and complex process, by which the consumer works upon the object... until often it is no longer recognizable as having any relation to the world of the abstract and becomes its very negation, something which could be neither bought nor given.

Consumer influence: Consumers can influence producers by making their views known, by seeking to persuade, by lobbying, by participation. This can mean consumers themselves making complaints or suggesting ways by which a product might better serve their needs. It can mean consumers, or their representatives, having the right to be involved in decision-making processes (such as parental membership of school

governing bodies). It can mean consumers banding together to form a pressure group or being represented through organisations especially set up to represent consumers' interests. Such groups or organisations can be focused on a particular product or industry, or be more general in nature. A classification of consumer representative bodies in OECD countries shows that they include Governmental consumer agencies, independent non-profit organisations, profit-making consumer-orientated institutions, as well as other types (Forbes 1987: 231-2).

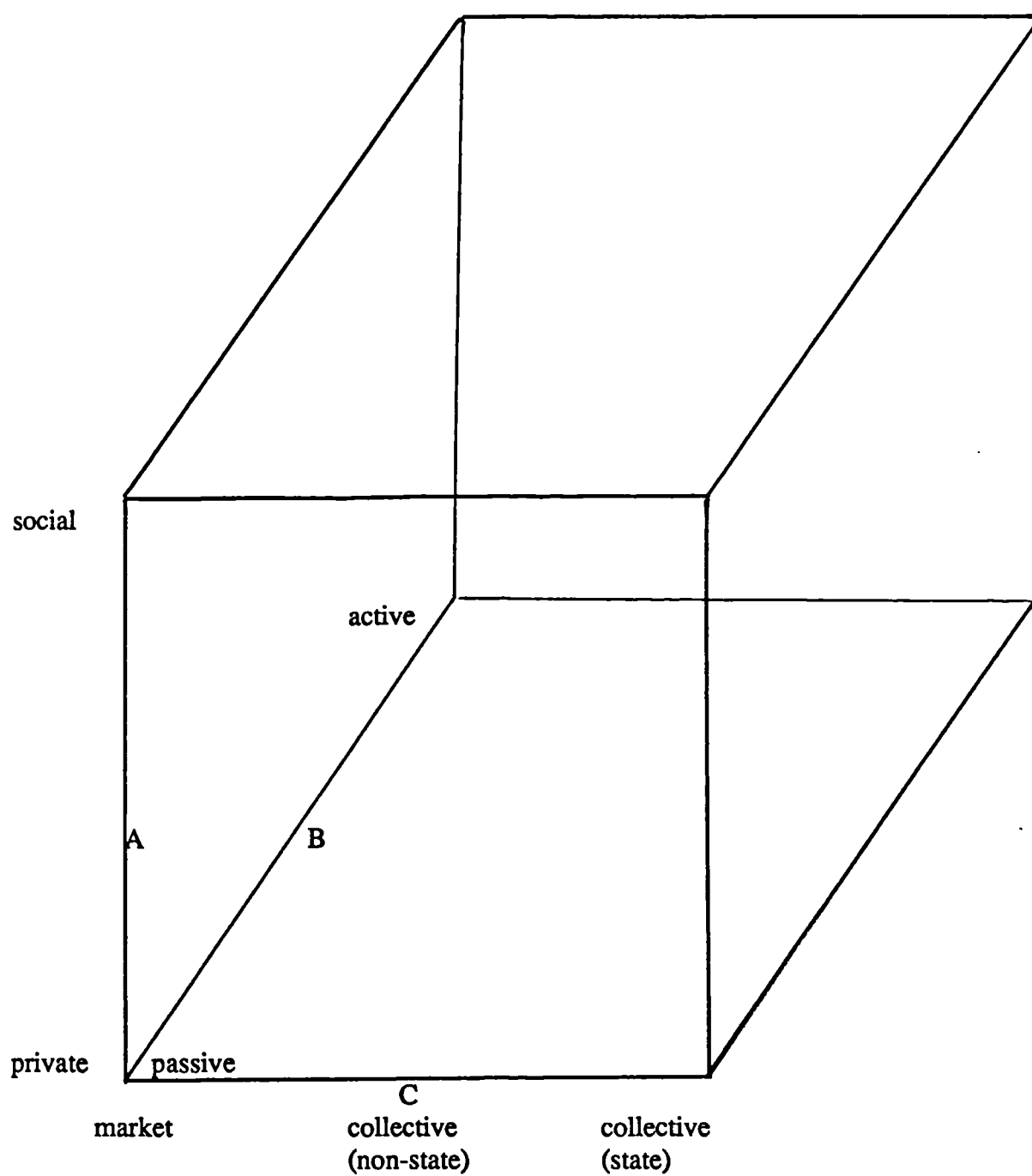
The level of involvement of individual consumers will vary between these types of activity and organisation. Individuals are by definition involved in individual complaints. An organisation such as the Consumers' Association has a membership made up of individual consumers, whilst the government-funded National Consumer Council does not. A local pressure group campaigning, say, for better rail services is likely to have an active membership of rail users. This is not to say that any particular activity or organisation is necessarily more representative of consumers' views, or more likely to have an influence. It is merely noted here that, whilst consumers can seek to influence producers by making their views known and by lobbying, there are a variety of means by which this might be done.

The general point is that the relationship between consumer and object of consumption is not necessarily limited to a passive one of purchase and consumption of the object. There is an important element of creativity and positive action in being a

consumer. The necessity and opportunities for that creativity and positive action will vary between types of goods and services, between individuals and between social groups (often depending on the material and cultural resources available to people as consumers). The act, or process, of consumption need not be constrained by the purpose of the product as conceived by the producer. Consumers can seek ways of adapting and modifying a product. They can take the initiative in trying to alter what the producer produces and the meanings of products. They can work *with* the producer in some cases.

Appreciation of the more active elements of the consumer's role (in particular, what are termed 'consumer work' and 'consumer influence' above) requires us to amend the diagrammatic representation of consumer activity in Figure 2.1. The extent to which consumers passively receive a product, on the one hand, or themselves affect its 'production' is a significant variable element in consumer activity. In Figure 2.2, therefore, a third axis is added and a three-dimensional representation of consumer activity created. The figure helps us to explore some of the consequences of not limiting consumer activity to 'over the counter' sales or similar purchases. For the purposes of this study, the area of interest lies between the top-right-near corner to the top-right-far corner, an area which represents goods and services that are provided by the state and consumed socially, their location between the two corners depending on the extent to which consumers are passive recipients or active participants. The bulk of education in the UK lies in this area. Developments in home-school links over the last two decades or so, together with

Figure 2.2: Three dimensional representation of consumer activity



A = how consumed (private - social)
B = consumer role (passive - active)
C = type of provision (market - collective)

the 1986 and 1988 Education Acts, have moved school education some way towards the far corner.

Consumer activity in this area between the two corners tends to be concerned, as previously noted, with facilities that are of profound importance for human and social life (such as defence, health, education, social security). Many of these are also services with regard to which a view has developed during the twentieth century that people have a *right* to receive them. Furthermore, participation at some level (and however distant) is bound to occur in a state which has some democratic structures. Thus, for example, important decisions about the health and education services will be made by the people's elected representatives in Parliament regardless of whether individual consumers have opportunities for individual or collective participation at a more local level. Moreover, as this point indicates, government and legislature are significant decision-makers in connection with such services and hence political structures and political activity are important means to participation for consumers.

It is clear that this kind of consumer activity differs greatly from that typical of the passive consumer purchasing an item in a competitive market to be consumed privately. The notions of *rights* and of *political activity* are of relevance, and hence we need to consider the individual's role as a citizen as well as a consumer.

Citizenship

Perception of the public nature of a service such as education is behind much of the criticism of consumerism as a concept relevant to schooling. Ranson, for example, questions whether education can be marketed at all:

If education is no more than acquiring a social status which schools can readily confer then it may be a discrete product which can be purchased in the market place. If education, however, is regarded more as an unfolding learning process which is adapted continuously to suit the needs of particular individuals then it is neither a product nor a process which is appropriate to the market place (Ranson 1990:15).

However, there is no reason why in principle an 'unfolding learning process' cannot be marketed and why a discerning consumer cannot seek an institution that is able to adapt to individual needs. The market does not preclude sensitivity, sophistication and professionalism on the part of suppliers. Indeed, some research suggests that market conditions in school education are positively associated with high levels of teacher professionalism and greater school effectiveness (Chubb and Moe 1990: 23,86-91) - though these findings are not uncontested and continued research is needed on the actual effects of a more market-like environment for schools. Undoubtedly, there will be imperfections and undesirable consequences (requiring intervention by public authorities) in a school education market,

as is the case for other markets. But problems exist within a public education system that places little importance on enhancing parental choice of school and market-like conditions. In such a system (as in England and Wales prior to the reforms of the 1980s), some schools still close, inequalities are passed on from one generation to another, and choice (affecting the 'product') is exercised by the minority who can move house or choose to live in the catchment area of their preferred state school.

Ranson, however, goes further in rejecting entirely a consumerist perspective on education and puts forward a citizenship perspective as an alternative:

But consumerism in education is not only flawed as an instrument for achieving its purported objectives, it is misconceived in its purposes. Consumerism is not citizenship. Nor can it achieve 'public choice'. A consumer expresses self-interest registered privately and with uncertain (though often malign) public consequences. A citizen, however, has a concern for the well-being of others as well as the health of society, and both should become the subject of public debate in order to constitute a public choice (Ranson 1990:15).

This argument, however, is weak. Consumers are not necessarily only motivated by self-interest and citizens are not necessarily altruistic. Voters may vote with private interests in mind, leading to political decisions that are (or which others might see as)

detrimental to the 'health of society'. The point is not who is more or who less self-interested. The point is which concept (and its associated conceptual framework) is the more accurate and useful analytical tool.

The notion of citizenship has been developed as a concept that is inclusive of people's relationship to goods and services that are collectively consumed. This development of citizenship can be seen as emerging in the late nineteenth century and is articulated in the writings of T H Marshall (Melling 1991: 228). Marshall, in his classic work Class, Citizenship and Social Development, distinguishes between three elements of citizenship: firstly, the civil element which is concerned with the rights necessary for individual freedom; secondly, the political element, by which Marshall means the right to participate in the exercise of political power as an elected person or an elector; and, thirdly, the social element. Marshall elaborates on this last aspect of citizenship as follows:

By the social element I mean the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society. The institutions most closely connected with it are the educational system and the social services (Marshall 1964: 72).

This social element of citizenship is concerned with those services that are most likely to fall within the sphere of collective

consumption. The nature of the entitlements that citizenship does, or ought, to provide for people in relation to these services continues to be debated. Social rights create 'an economic and social status of citizenship *outside the market* where, to some degree, a person's entitlement is determined by non-market criteria' (Plant 1991:61).

As such, they constitute a significant ideological battleground between left and right. The left emphasise the necessity of enforceable rights, underpinned by state action, if the injustices of the market are to be overcome, whilst the right criticise what they see as the debilitating dependency that such rights create and seek to displace as much state protection as possible with enhanced consumer choice and reliance on market forces (Plant 1991).

Renewed sociological interest in citizenship has reinforced the point that the notion of citizenship is subject to the nature of social relationships and power struggles over periods of time. Melling (1991) draws attention to the unevenness of progress in securing social rights in Britain and how, for example, the creation of social insurance was the culmination of struggles over citizenship rights since the 1880s. Turner argues that citizenship does not have a unitary character and proposes a typology of citizenship (Turner 1990). In this typology, citizenship can be passive or active, depending on whether it grew from above (ie from the state down) or below (ie from the people as active agents of change), and it can emphasise the private realm

(individual and family) or the public arena of political action.

Harrison stresses the importance of understanding the experience of citizenship and, crucially, the ways in which this differs as between different social groups: 'men and women, black and white, groups within the working class, are all demarcated and differentiated by the institutions which encourage or regulate activities, secure or confer status, and grant material benefits', and this affects the extent to which they are incorporated into society and able to gain access to citizenship rights (Harrison 1991: 210). Turner (1991) emphasises how the person's experience of citizenship changes through his or her life-cycle.

It might be argued that the proper location for the issue of collective consumption and people's role and activities as consumers of public services ought to be within the concept of citizenship. According to Hall and Held (1989: 176), the 'diversity of areas in which citizenship is being claimed and contested today is essential to any modern conception of it...'. Moreover, it is evident that social rights and welfare issues have been an accepted aspect of citizenship debates at least since Marshall's writings. The sociological debates on citizenship alluded to indicate an appreciation that the concept of citizenship is not a single set of codified rights, but that it represents a *variable relationship* between people and their political community, the nature of that relationship being continuously developed and determined by political debates and struggles and by people's social experiences. It can be argued

that, accordingly, the growth of welfare services, and state action generally, has given rise to the recognition that citizenship should incorporate people's role as 'collective consumers'. Harrison explicitly incorporates this role by asserting that the 'structures of organised consumption' are one of the three contexts for the 'construction of citizenship' (the others are political/civil rights and duties, and the 'structures of organised labour markets'):

Much of what is conventionally covered by references to social policies and the 'welfare state' concerns the control, maintenance, management and organisation of consumption for households, groups and individuals (Harrison 1991: 211).

It can be further argued that the citizenship concept is the 'natural home' for collective consumption issues by noting that the aim of the right is to 'privatise' this consumption by asserting the primacy of the market and consumer choice over state provision of goods and services. This is where we come back to Ranson's argument: that people should not be seen as *consumers* in relation to school education but as *citizens*. The argument runs thus: there is a clear choice to be made in the terminology used (and the conceptual frameworks the alternatives represent) and the nature of education as a public service requires it to be made in favour of seeing parents (and others) as citizens.

A further perspective is offered by Harrison which, on the face of it, allows us to embrace the citizenship concept and to avoid basing this choice on ideological beliefs. He argues that

privatised forms of social provision (and access to 'choices' in markets) amount to an alternative form of 'modern citizenship' which has been expanding and securing certain types of household welfare in Britain recently (Harrison 1991: 212)

In other words, he is saying, one should not decide in advance whether or not privatisation or more market-like conditions for public services empowers people, but maintain an open mind and keep the debate within the context of the citizenship concept. This, however, seems to be a case of trying to reconcile a wish to be scientific and a desire to be 'ideologically sound', ie taking as objective an approach as possible to the 'marketisation' of public services whilst retaining the more (ideologically) comfortable notion of citizenship as against the more disturbing one of consumerism.

The response to the argument that collective consumption issues should be dealt with as aspects of citizenship is two-fold.

Firstly, collective consumption cannot be clearly separated from private consumption. The analysis on which the three dimensional representation of collective consumption (Figure 2.2) is based suggests that consumer activity is best conceived as being classifiable along axes rather than in watertight conceptual boxes. The consequence of this is that the relevance of the public sphere and of political decisions cannot be confined to one type of good or service. This is reinforced by the elaboration of the consumer empowerment models in the following chapter in

which political decisions are shown to be a pervading feature. Membership of a political community (the state, but also super-national institutions such as the European Community) is an integral element of all aspects of consumer activity. That is to say, in acting as a consumer, the person is also exercising rights and duties that arise from decisions made by and membership of a polity. The polity creates the legal framework for private transactions, intervenes in the market (by laying down minimum safety standards of products, for example), regulates certain industries (telecommunications and water, for example), and funds or directly provides other services (such as health and school education). Thus, people can act politically, in their capacity as citizens, in relation to goods and services that they consume (or may like or need to consume in the future). They can make their views known to their political representatives or to pressure groups that campaign on their behalf; they can exercise their right to vote or themselves stand for office; they can seek to enforce their rights through the courts.

The individual may move between some or many of such different kinds of activities in the same day or over a period of years. Examples include:

- after purchasing a private good or service (acting as a private consumer), lobbying for Government action to remedy an injustice resulting from the purchase (acting politically)
- buying, at one time, health care from a private health company and, at another, seeking treatment from the National Health Service

- choosing between options offered by a state service, such as state schools
- representing the (or a) consumer viewpoint on a consumer body, which could be a voluntary one like the Campaign for Real Ale (seeking to influence private industry) or a statutory body like the community health councils (seeking to influence the state sector)
- purchasing goods and services with the benefit of consumer protection laws and of publicly-funded advice and information through Citizens Advice Bureaux, etc.

The second response follows from the first. That is, it is asking too much of the concept of citizenship to deal adequately with the consumer dimension of modern society. This is for three, inter-linking reasons. Firstly, consumer activity is a rich and diverse aspect of social and economic life. This is the picture that emerges with the broad conception of the consumer outlined above and the types of activity characteristic of that consumer. The creative and positive actions of the consumer are particularly evident in terms of the personal control model of empowerment (outlined in Chapter 3). It is impossible to reduce this diversity to the rights and duties of citizenship. A parent, for example, cannot solely be conceived as a citizen in relation to his or her child's education: citizenship is relevant (the parent, for example, has the right to elect the politicians who make decisions about state education and is bound by law to ensure the child is educated),

but the parent also undertakes many activities which have an impact on the child's education (such as reading to the child, buying him or her books and toys, taking the child on trips, making choices - or helping the child to make choices - about which school to go to, which options to take, whether homework is seen as important, and so on) and which cannot be conceived as the parent acting as a citizen. This stems from the point mentioned above, that it is impossible to demarcate private and collective consumption in absolute terms. In most instances where public services exist to give people a right to health care, pensions, security services, education or whatever, people are also making decisions in the 'non-public' sphere: examples (in relation to the national health service) include buying medicines at the chemist, choosing non-conventional forms of medicine, paying for private treatment, choosing whether or not to smoke or take exercise, and so on.

Secondly, the reliance that citizenship tends to place on political institutions may not always lead to the best outcome for those who wish to be protected or served by their citizenship. 'Political failure', which 'stems from imperfect communication between government and voters, and/or from the monopolistic behaviour of the publicly-protected or -sponsored 'official' suppliers' (West 1970: 1), exists just as much as 'market failure'. The practical difficulties facing the individual citizen, or even group of citizens, wishing to effect or influence change are undoubtedly great indeed: he or she may be faced with opposition from entrenched groups, or may simply face bureaucratic inertia; he or she may not be able to spare the time, bear the costs or possess the

'cultural capital' necessary to stand for election as parent governor or local councillor, or indeed to orchestrate or become involved in a campaign. In the American context, Lieberman (1989:14-19) provides an illustration of how the pursuit of change as a citizen can be stalled or blocked by interest groups. The experience of being a passive recipient of a 'given service', which the parent 'pays for' (with others) through taxation, is a real one. It may persist throughout a child's schooling or it may be only during certain periods (for example, when other commitments - perhaps smaller children - make it impossible to play an active part in the school and other activities outside the home).

The fact that there are, as already noted, differing experiences of citizenship is relevant to the question of the limitations of political institutions. Phillips argues that women's need, in contrast to men, has been more often for the state to 'step forward into private life in order to free them from its tyrannies', intervening in such areas as childcare, domestic violence, and provision of abortion and contraception (Phillips 1991: 159). Pateman (1989) highlights the dilemma for women, emanating from their involvement in unpaid welfare work: whether to seek full citizenship alongside men in a 'gender-neutral' world or whether to emphasise the different capacities, talents, needs and concerns of women and strive for recognition of women's work as a basis (distinct from paid employment) for citizenship. Gender serves as an example. It illustrates the problem that has underlain the left's concern about citizenship rights, namely that the granting of *formal* rights to all citizens does not mean that all

can enjoy them as *substantive*, actually-experienced rights. Thus Held asks:

Do existing relations between men and women, between employers and employees, between the different social classes, or between blacks, whites and other ethnic groups, allow citizenship to become a reality in practice? This question lies at the centre of the 'politics of citizenship' today. Any current assessment of citizenship must be made on the basis of liberties and rights which are tangible, capable of being enjoyed, in both the state and civil society (Held 1991: 22).

This concern is amply justified. The point that I wish to draw attention to is that, just as there are multiple experiences of citizenship, (a) there are multiple ways of achieving public goals aimed at serving and protecting the citizen, and (b) these do not only consist of centralised-state solutions exactly because many of the problems lie in civil society or the 'non-public' sphere.

The representation of consumer activity developed above (Figure 2.2) indicates how provision of services can be plotted on an axis that runs from 'private market' through various forms of non-state collective provision to centralised state intervention. Non-state collective provision, such as health, welfare, leisure and adult education services managed by working class communities, have tended to decline with the onset of centrally run services (Cooke 1990: 179), though other forms of collective action, such as credit unions, may flourish in certain areas (Drakeford and

Hudson 1991). Equally, it may be that concern with the well-being (in the broadest sense) of the citizen will require focusing on markets: how a particular market can be used or developed, or how it should be reformed or controlled. Thus, for example, a public policy that seeks to ensure equal access to health services must be concerned with the distribution of pharmacies (a segment of the retail market) and intervene to ensure that market forces do not lead to areas being deprived of such outlets (Levitt and Wall 1984: 217).

Let me emphasise that the necessity for collective political and legal action, and the operation of large-scale centralised services, remains. Hence, for example, enforcing the law in the case of domestic violence has its proper role to play, and services such as health and education are likely to require high levels of public funds to achieve anything approaching equal access for all. The point is that there are limitations to what political institutions alone can achieve and there is a necessity to engage with people's role as consumers within markets and as participants in other forms of service provision, such as consumer co-operatives. Recognising political failure as a reality does not mean that, either generally or in any particular case, the introduction of market forces and consumer choice will empower people. It may or may not do. The challenge where it is tried is to devise ways by which the impact of 'marketisation' can be measured. The point is that both political failure and market failure are the everyday realities of an imperfect life and that exclusive reliance on either citizenship (state action) or narrow consumerism (the competitive market) as means of empowerment is likely to

maximise the chances of failing to empower.

The third reason why the concept of citizenship is too limited is that the creation of publicly-funded services does not of itself ensure that they are responsive to people's needs, pleasant for individuals to use, or as efficient and effective as they ought to be. Much of the work of the National Consumer Council is directed towards public services and involves assessments of policy and practice from the perspective of service users. To aid this kind of work, five key principles have been identified that can be applied to public services. These were first developed in relation to goods and services sold in the market place and are described as providing a 'structural underpinning of consumerism' (Potter 1988: 150). They are access (which concerns the matter of who should have access to a service as well as issues such as geographical distribution and availability), choice (which exists to varying degrees in public services, like education, though there are costs and limitations concerning the extent of choice that is feasible), information (people need to know what is available, their entitlements, how to obtain a service, and so on), redress (ie mechanisms by which to settle complaints and grievances) and representation (which means that the views and interests of consumers should be adequately represented to decision-makers who affect the services received by consumers). It is not claimed that application of these principles is a cure-all. They cannot, for example, in themselves overcome inequalities in society that make equal citizenship rights difficult to achieve. They do, however, help in focusing on some of the needs and experiences that are of great importance

to people who use public services and which affect the quality of that service as it is enjoyed by the individual user. In this way, the consumer dimension adds to our understanding of how the intended benefits of citizenship - with its entitlements to public services - can be increased, by improving the quality of service provision and helping to ensure that they are made accessible to more people.

Towards an Alternative Concept

The suspicion and mistrust of the left towards consumerism is focused on its narrow form and its association with reliance on market forces. Recognition of a need to explore new ideas on citizenship whilst acknowledging that people's consumer activity cannot be expunged entirely is implicit in Coote's approach towards social rights:

...the idea of enforceable social rights offers a new way of empowering citizens, different from the traditional models of empowerment favoured by the Right (market forces) and by the Left (democratic accountability). Social rights are not presented here as some kind of universal solution, overriding markets and democracy as a means of empowerment, but as an alternative - *and possibly complementary* - approach which deserves further investigation [my emphasis] (Coote 1992: 1).

Just as the notion of citizenship is in itself too limiting, too much is expected of the concept of the consumer which, although it is

disliked and contested by some, has entered into the vocabulary used to speak about public services (by policy-makers, researchers, consumer affairs specialists, etc). The earliest uses of the term 'consume' (to destroy, use up, waste, exhaust) do not carry positive or creative connotations (Williams 1981: 78). Even though the pervasiveness of consumer activity and the expanding application of 'consumer language' has been accompanied by increasingly sophisticated sociological analyses of consumption², it is argued here that neither the narrow nor the broad conceptions of the consumer discussed above in themselves adequately represent the day-to-day activities of users of goods and services, nor the meanings which they attach to these activities.

An alternative conceptual framework is needed, one which recognises the intertwining of the citizen and (both narrow and broad) consumer dimensions of people's activity. Hence, an ideal type will be set out in Chapter 4 which seeks to draw together the conceptual framework that is being developed in this discussion of the consumer as a problematic concept and through the elaboration of models of consumer empowerment. This formulation will suggest that consumer activity has much that is positive to contribute to our understanding of how the individual can participate more effectively in a democratic society. In other words, rather than choosing between Leadbeater's expansive *democratic individualism* and a narrow consumer individualism, the two should be synthesised.

² See, for example, the special issue on consumption of *Sociology*, Vol 24 No 1

3. MODELS OF CONSUMER EMPOWERMENT

Four models of consumer empowerment are outlined below (each is outlined in general terms, and then discussed in relation to school education). They are based on my experience as a consumer advocate and researcher for the UK National Consumer Council, on work aimed at developing further a typology of participatory action first put forward by Macbeth (Macbeth *et al.* 1980; Macbeth 1989; Woods 1988b, 1989)¹, and models which can be seen as underlying recent educational reforms (Glatter 1991; Glatter & Woods forthcoming) which I have built upon and added to². The models incorporate the range of activities and capacity for positive influence characteristic of the broad conception of the consumer discussed in the previous chapter. They have been set out and discussed briefly in Woods 1993a.

The four consumer empowerment models are:

- the *competitive market model* - in which the emphasis is on choice and competition between producers
- the *personal control model* - in which the emphasis is on the consumer's active role in checking, modifying and working on goods and services him- or herself

¹ see Appendix A for further discussion of this.

² The first, third and fourth of these (as listed overleaf) were suggested by Glatter (1991) as distinguishable models underlying the educational reforms enacted in the 1980s. They have been elaborated upon by me specifically as models of *consumer empowerment*, drawing on the work involved in developing the typology of participatory action and a broader conception of the consumer. The second (the personal control model) has been added by me.

- the *quality assurance model* - in which the emphasis is on standards and specifications being laid down by authoritative bodies, often with statutory backing
- the *participative model* - in which the emphasis is on consumers interacting with and influencing producers.

It might be argued that these overlook a very important aspect of consumerism, namely the 'arming' of consumers with legal rights. It might be said that there ought to be a 'legal rights' model of consumer empowerment, on the grounds that a significant part of the advances gained by the consumer movement in the last 35 years has consisted in the gaining of rights in law. In furtherance of this argument, it might be said that consumer rights enshrined in law provide protection in a uniquely powerful way.

Notwithstanding the fact that there are very often practical difficulties for consumers wishing to take advantage of the law (they need to know their rights and have the resources to take legal action, for example), I would not wish to argue against the importance of legal rights. However, the view taken here is that the provision of legal rights is a method which is likely to be deployed *within* a wider context of the four models listed above. Thus, for example, the right to return goods which are unfit for the purpose for which they are bought can be seen as giving consumers some power, at the expense of producers, within the market place, - or, to put it another way, of making the competitive market work more effectively. Consumer rights in law are, therefore, seen as having relevance to all of the four

models, rather than being treated as a distinct model of consumer empowerment.

The Competitive Market Model

This relates to the first of the ways, referred to in the previous chapter, by which consumers can influence producers, ie consumer purchasing power. In this model, consumers' interests are supposed to be protected and promoted by the fact that producers need to compete with each other for custom.

Consumers exercise choice and their purchasing decisions act as signals to producers indicating whether or not they are giving consumers what they want. The importance of choice in this model is not only that it allows consumers not to choose those products they do not want, but that it leads producers (or some of them) to *respond* to consumers' needs and preferences. This point has been highlighted in work I am engaged in concerning competition between schools (further details of which are given below):

An integral part of any market is the way in which producers respond, or choose not to respond, to the wishes of those who want to use their product. Marketing, defined succinctly as 'finding out what people want, then providing it, and letting them know'.., thus incorporates the notion of responsiveness. The notion is a crucial element in evaluating a market. Producer responsiveness determines the extent to which, under market pressures, quality is

enhanced in accordance with the wishes of consumers (Glatter, Johnson and Woods 1993: 9).

The nature and genesis of consumers' wishes are not unproblematic. They cannot be assumed as 'givens' that arise from the individual consumer untouched by history, culture and social context. People, as was posited in Chapter 2, are in a dialectical relationship with the social, both formed by it and forming it. The formation of consumer wishes is a dynamic and continuous process within that relationship. Accordingly, as well as responding to consumers it has to be acknowledged that producers may engage in attempts to alter consumer wishes or to create new ones.

The competitive market does not necessarily in practice act to the benefit of consumers (or of all consumers). Thus 'market failure' is a major rationale behind government action to safeguard the consumer through statutory rights and consumer protection bodies (Ramsay 1989: 34-47). Consumers are dependent, for example, on:

- there being active and genuine competition (whereas the interests of producers may lead to monopolies, restrictive practices, and the like)
- access to information which enables them to make an informed choice and to evaluate claims made by producers which are intended to influence them

- producers being honest and truthful in their claims
- having sufficient money so that their needs and preferences can be converted into economic demand in the market place
- producers being willing and capable of being responsive to consumers so as to provide what they want.

There can also be other difficulties which affect the consumer's interest. For example, a competitive market may result in higher costs because it does not attract the economies of scale that a large, publicly-provided service may do.

The attempt in contemporary Britain to apply a competitive market model to school education can be traced to right-wing thinkers active in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In 1970, for example, O'Sullivan argued that Conservatives should not be taking sides for or against comprehensive schools, but should be searching for an alternative scheme that would ensure parental freedom and choice, promote competition between schools and encourage decentralised initiative (Knight 1990: 66).

State involvement in English school education had begun modestly with a relatively small subsidy in the 1830s (West 1970: 137). It grew with the passing of the 1870 Elementary Education Act and subsequent legislation, until a national system of compulsory schooling administered by local education authorities was created. This resulted in the demise, or transfer into the state sector, of many private schools, an emphasis on

state provision and little importance being attached to parental choice of school - see, for example, West (1970) for a critical analysis of the state education system that had been created, and Gardner (1984) who argues that the loss of working class private schooling (as a result of legislation in the 1870s) represented a loss of control over education for those working class people who had sent their children to working class schools. Choice and competition, however, was never completely absent from the state system. It was possible for some parents to move house so that a child would be in the catchment area of their preferred school; private schooling was an option for some; parents, local education authorities and central government interpreted the 1944 Education Act in a way that allowed a degree of parental choice of school that had not been intended when the Act was passed (Walford 1990: 68).

The reforms begun in the 1980s, nevertheless, mark a departure from previous policy, and aspects of these reforms can be seen as reflecting the competitive market model. Responsibility for management of school budgets is now devolved to schools, the size of the budget is based largely on age-weighted pupil numbers (and hence parental choice of school), and schools are required to admit pupils up to their full physical capacity ('more open enrolment'). At the same time, different types of school have been created (grant-maintained and city technology colleges), increasing - as it is seen by the Conservative Government - choice, and schools and local education authorities have been required to provide parents with more information (including the publication of performance tables for schools - Department of

Education and Science 1991: 5). The priority accorded to parental choice and diversity and competition amongst schools is re-inforced by the proposals in the White Paper Choice and Diversity (Department For Education/Welsh Office 1992).

In this model, the school is viewed

as in some respects analogous to a small or, in the case of many secondaries, a medium-sized business. Schools compete with one another for pupils and funds, generally within a 'competitive arena' which contains a group of (normally) adjacent schools in a particular locality (Glatter 1991).

According to the current Conservative Government, more competition (through local management of schools and more open enrolment)

will drive up standards as schools and parents take advantage of the freedom to make their own decisions... [and] will ensure that our primary and secondary system is more responsive to customer choice which will drive up standards (Department of Education and Science press release, 11 December 1990).

The shift in thinking about schooling has not been confined to the Conservative Party. Whilst the Labour Party is more sceptical about the virtues of choice with regard to school education, it sees that both parental choice and differentiation between schools have an important part to play in the system:

Particularly, and not solely at secondary level, we wish to see schools develop their own character...Greater access to information will allow parents and children to choose schools which offer the type of education most suitable to their interest and abilities (Straw 1991).

The PAsCI (Parental and School Choice Interaction) Study³, currently in progress, is investigating the extent to which there is identifiable consumer empowerment in the context of heightened competition between schools: in particular, how far schools are being responsive to parental preferences. A number of tentative conclusions and possible trends suggest themselves on the basis of work undertaken on this project to date. Schools are responding to choice and competition by increased emphasis on *promotional* activities (improved brochures, better links with feeder schools, etc). Enhanced choice and competition, however, will not have the benefits claimed for them (making the education system more 'consumer' responsive and improving educational achievement) if schools only respond by 'selling' themselves better. A key finding, therefore, is that some schools are tackling the problem of how to attract parents by making what we have called *substantive* changes (concerned with how the school organises itself and with its activities - curriculum, teaching methods, management and planning, etc - as a school).

³ I am at the time of writing principal investigator for the PAsCI Study. Aspects of the research data are reported in a number of papers, including: Glatter *et al.* 1993; Glatter and Woods forthcoming; Woods 1992a, 1992b, 1993b, 1994a, 1994b; Bagley 1994; Bagley *et al.* 1994.

Such changes (not all carried out in any one school) include alterations to homework policy, the introduction of banding, emphasis on the caring and pastoral aspect of schooling, encouragement of staff to gain more qualifications, increased stress on extra-curricular activities and greater community access to school facilities. Whether such changes are in line with what parents want is not clear from the data available to date.

Although substantive change has been identified, school decision-makers are not necessarily willing to allow parents to alter their basic views as professionals of what constitutes a 'good school'. Thus the kinds of substantive change that take place in response to parental choice may be restricted. Differences of view were evident amongst the professionals and there were indications that headteachers may be more likely than other teaching staff to acknowledge a need to be responsive to parents.

There are indications of a growing interest amongst schools in more formal and planned ways of obtaining parental feedback and enabling parents to influence school decision-making. However, it appears from both the case study data and the databank that, in general, enthusiasm for finding out what parents want is considerably less than for promoting the school to parents and the wider community.

With regard to the question of whether schools are responding in ways parents want them to, the impact of enhanced choice and competition in the case study area has been characterised as consisting at this stage of a series of 'cross-currents', rather than

a single discernible trend (Woods 1992b). The overall direction of change, and whether more parents are obtaining schooling more in line with their preferences, has yet to become clear. There are variations amongst parents surveyed as to what most influences their choice decision. Child-focused themes (such as the child's preference for a school and the child's friends being there) feature strongly. However, for certain groups of parents (in particular, those wanting their child to go to the selective grammar school or the most popular comprehensive) the school's standards of academic education and its reputation are especially important.

Some schools, particularly in the early stages of the study, emphasised the caring, pastoral aspect of schooling, an aspect of marked importance to most parents. This, together with early findings suggesting that pressure of competition may be encouraging schools to make it easier for all parents to become involved in their child's schooling, might be seen as an indicator that school-decision makers are seeking to be responsive to the generality of parents. However, there are indications too of decision-makers in the case study schools giving special emphasis to certain groups of parents, namely academically orientated and middle class parents, by making changes which will be attractive to them: moreover, this trend seems to have strengthened as the study has proceeded.

Underlying all of these developments are the restraints on what schools are able to do in order to attract parents. They cannot re-locate themselves in order to be near all parents (nearness to

school and convenience of home-school travel being significant factors in parental choice) and they have limited budgets with which to make changes that will attract parents.

These initial findings illustrate the complexity of examining the question of the extent to which application of a competitive market model empowers the parent as consumer. The initiative that this model promises to place in the hands of the parent may appear simple and familiar: the choosing of a preferred 'product' from the range on offer. A key point to note, however, is that the act of choosing by the consumer is not sufficient in itself to ensure empowerment. There are a host of decisions and actions by others (school governors, headteachers, local and central government) which are as crucial to determining whether choice brings about 'increased opportunities for the consumer to realise his or her will'.

The Personal Control Model

This relates to the second of the ways, referred to in the Chapter 2, by which consumers can influence production, ie 'consumer work'. It is based on the recognition that consumers can work on, modify and transform products, and emphasises application of the consumer's own criteria and values to assessing the good or service in question. By this means, they have a *direct* influence on the nature of the product and its quality. It is also taken here to include consumers' actions in checking the quality of a good or service to establish if it meets the level of specification and quality that the consumer requires. The emphasis in the personal

control model is on the consumer's own initiative, action and creativity. It can be divided into two modes of action: *doing* and *checking*.

Doing includes action, such as cooking food and putting together self-assembly furniture, which is required by the nature of the product. Equally, a consumer may choose to undertake an activity in order to get the kind and/or quality of product he or she wants. Thus, for example, consumers may choose to decorate their own homes because available decorators are too costly or their standard of work too low; they may represent themselves in a small claims county court case because they believe that they can put over their case much better than someone not directly involved. Consumers may modify or transform a product (by for example, taking up the hem on a dress, dying an item of clothing, customising a car). The significance of this lies not only in the practical modifications or transformations that consumers may make, but also in the alterations and transformations of meaning. Products are vehicles for communicating important messages about social position and relationships (Featherstone 1991: 17-18), able to be used not only to assert superior status but 'hijacked for cultures of resistance, re-appearing as street-style cred or assertive femininity' (Mort 1989: 166).

In these kinds of ways, consumers can take direct charge of production, or an aspect of production, by working on the product themselves.

Checking might be seen as consumer-initiated quality assurance, as opposed to the quality assurance checks that many producers undertake before selling their products. Examples include checking over houses and cars before purchase (it does not preclude, of course, obtaining additional or supplementary professional surveys of such items), monitoring the effectiveness of a particular course of medical treatment, and checking goods after they have been received. Information is an essential resource that the consumer draws on in the checking process. Relevant information may vary, depending on the nature of the product. It may consist of written information relating to a distant good (for example, overseas holiday resorts), personal inspection of the item in question, advice from others who have experience of the service; it may be technical in nature, involving awareness of the alternative standards and specifications relating to the good or service in question. *Checking* may be followed by further action if the good or service is not satisfactory. That further action may involve deciding not to buy, complaining, returning a product and choosing a different supplier or (staying within the personal control model) making repairs or modifications oneself to bring the product up to standard.

It should not be assumed that consumer work (either *doing* or *checking*) is necessarily a good thing from the consumer's viewpoint. Consumers may be driven to it simply because they do not have sufficient money, and the results (if they do not have the skills or knowledge required) may be a lower standard than they would want. However, it is a possible means of empowerment, of taking charge, and it is this aspect which is of

interest here. Relatively little attention (compared with the other models) appears to have been paid to what is termed here the personal control model.

With regard to school education, both *doing* and *checking* are highly relevant. Many parents supplement the school education their child is receiving by teaching in the home (most bookshops now contain substantial displays of educational books with which parents can help their child's learning, for example). Macbeth (1989: 65-73) is particularly keen that more attention should be given to home learning and observes that there is little research into it and little practical assistance offered to parents to support them in this.

Parents' initiatives in teaching their child can be formal or informal, structured or haphazard, undertaken with or without the knowledge of the school. None of these characteristics is necessarily to be preferred to its opposite. Parents can take advantage of opportunities, without planning, and that can be excellent for the child's learning (reading road signs when lost on a car journey is a good way of demonstrating the importance of, and practising, reading!). One would not expect parents to tell the school that they are taking a child to a planetarium to learn about the stars, though if they were wanting to take him or her through a reading scheme it might be considered sensible to consult the school. A family might take entire control of and put much effort into religious education outside school hours because they have strong religious beliefs. Thus there are a variety of initiatives that parents might want to take, only some

of which it is appropriate to formally consult with the school about. In certain circumstances, supplementing a child's school education at home may be a way of dealing with a situation in which parents are dissatisfied with the standard of teaching. Some parents choose to avoid formal schooling completely and take entire charge themselves of their child's education.

The personal control model also embraces collective action by parents. A recent, significant example is the action by large numbers of parents in Scotland in keeping their children away from school so as to avoid the tests prescribed by law. One regional councillor described this as 'a massive act of civil disobedience' and it has been estimated that two-thirds of pupils aged seven and 11 escaped the tests (Guardian, 22 October 1991). There may be a campaigning element in this kind of action (seeking to influence decision-makers) so that it partially falls within the participative model. It particularly exemplifies the collective aspect of the personal control model because parents are modifying, by direct action, the education their children are receiving.

Checking is equally an important activity in school education. Parents have the legal responsibility of ensuring that their child is educated. They, therefore, have an obligation to assure themselves that their child is receiving an acceptable level of education. Parents are likely in any case to want to know how their child is doing. To do this, parents need information by which they can measure and compare this, so they can judge the progress of their child and the quality of schools. This is part of

the reasoning behind the national curriculum tests and requiring more detailed reports for parents about their child (Department of Education and Science 1991: 2). The better informed parents are, the more likely it is that they will be able to check that their child is progressing in the way that they wish - and, if he or she is not, to take appropriate action aimed at remedying this.

However, the information required by law is not necessarily the information parents most want. The legislation is not based on research into the criteria parents themselves use (or would like to use) or their information needs as defined by themselves. Thus it cannot be assumed that information which the authorities require to be made available is that which parents want in order to check the schooling their children are receiving.

Doing and *checking* are significant aspects of consumer activity. However, just as home learning is under-researched, the scope, nature and potential of the personal control model as a means of empowerment is relatively neglected. It is an area in which work would be fruitful.

The Quality Assurance Model

This is characterised by the laying down of standards and specifications about a good or service. These are intended to protect the consumer and ensure that he or she can expect at least a minimum (and defined) standard of product.

Public regulation of the quality of private goods and services has tended to concentrate on product safety. This reflects 'the

difficulties facing governments in accurately reflecting the potential variety of consumer tastes and the danger that lies in stifling variety and innovation' (Ramsay 1989: 416). Where standards are set by public authorities, although the rationale is protection of the consumer, producers are sometimes able to influence in their own interests the process of standard setting in a way which consumers are unable to do. In relation to food standards in the UK, for example, it has been argued that these are largely agreed between civil servants and business officials and that 'expert committees...are dominated by the food interests, which also have much influence in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food' (Ramsay 1989: 472). With regard to professional services, although traditionally left by and large to regulate themselves, there are a number of ways by which public authorities can seek to influence service quality. These include enforcement of standards by an administrative agency, certification (granting of a certificate of competence to individuals meeting defined requirements), and licensing (in which only licensed providers are legally permitted to provide services) which is perhaps the most common form of regulation.

There are various difficulties with each of these (see Ramsay 1989: 463-469). The involvement of the professionals themselves in the regulatory system (because, for example, they are the experts drawn upon to define standards and minimum requirements and because there are problems in policing large numbers of widely-dispersed service-providers) means that professional self-interest may result in policies against the

consumer interest, including:

the protection or promotion of an unjustified professional monopoly over rights to practice (restrictions on entry) or the imposition of restrictions on post-entry competitive practices amongst members...These costs are sufficiently serious that many analysts of the professions have found that second- and third-party interests in professional markets that are subject to self-regulation would be better served by either less regulation or by direct regulation by the State (Trebilcock 1983: 103).

Private companies may themselves be seen as following a quality assurance model and as offering an analogy relevant to public services, as with the

Marks and Spencer-type relationship between the centre and the branches, or... with franchise operations in which the local outlets are independently-owned but have to conform to specified criteria concerning the range of goods carried, quality standards and other matters (Glatter 1991).

There is a strong emphasis in the quality assurance model on protection and safeguards being erected for consumers. It would be a mistake, however, to believe that this model necessarily implies an insignificant role on the part of consumers themselves. For example, advertising about BSI (British Standards Institution) standards is intended to encourage more consumers to choose

goods that have these standards thus, it may be argued, putting pressure on producers to adopt these. More generally, the more knowledgeable consumers are about standards and specifications that are required by law, or which represent best practice, or about the licensing requirements for professionals (and the standards that these are meant to enforce), the more able they are to take appropriate action. Thus redress, ie seeking to have a grievance about a good or service settled by the producer concerned or a relevant authority, is associated with the notion of standards that are known and accepted. These may be general and enshrined in law (such as goods being fit for the purpose for which they are bought), or much more detailed (as with regulations on food standards). Equally, armed with knowledge about standards and specifications, the consumer may be able to avoid problems by buying that product which most nearly meets the standards he or she requires.

This assessment of a good or service using authoritative quality standards is termed *applying*. This activity of *applying* may take place prior to, during, or after the process of consumption.

In school education, the goal of quality assurance model is pursued via a variety of means. The model is exemplified by the national curriculum and its associated provisions for pupil testing and assessment. A significant part of the reasoning behind their introduction was that they would raise the standard, or quality, of education and ensure its consistency between schools. The Conservative Government set out its reasoning in the consultation

document on the national curriculum prior to legislation:

A national curriculum backed by clear assessment arrangements will help to raise standards of attainment by

(i) ensuring that all pupils study a broad and balanced range of subjects throughout their compulsory schooling...

(ii) setting clear objectives for what children over the full range of ability should be able to achieve...

(iii) ensuring that all pupils, regardless of sex, ethnic origin and geographical location, have access to broadly the same good and relevant curriculum...

(iv) checking on progress towards those objectives and performance achieved at various stages...

(Department of Education and Science/Welsh Office
1987: 3-4)

In terms of this model, the national curriculum and testing are a means to achieving two important objectives - firstly, making clear to schools what is expected of them and what they must provide; and, secondly (by making these expectations mandatory and public), enabling parents to judge their child's school and to act accordingly. The extent to which these objectives are achieved in practice depends on a range of factors. These include the resources available to schools and other matters such as availability of suitably qualified staff.

Of crucial importance, too, is the extent to which parents are aware of the national curriculum requirements: that is, the extent to which parents can carry out the activity of *applying*, assuring for themselves that schools are meeting standards laid down by law. Research conducted in 1989 provides some indication of the proportions at that time unaware of aspects of the national curriculum. With regard to one aspect (knowledge of the national curriculum subjects), one study suggested that around a quarter of parents did not know that English, maths and science were included (Hughes *et al.* 1990: 19). Another, commissioned by the Department of Education and Science (1989: 34), indicated that the proportions not knowing that particular subjects were included ranged from 15% (in respect of maths) to 90% (in respect of music). It might be expected that these proportions have since fallen, as the national curriculum has been implemented and there has been publicity from time to time about it (via newspaper reports and leaflets aimed at parents, for example). However, it is salutary to note that fewer than 1% of respondents could name all ten subjects to be covered by the national curriculum in England (Department of Education and Science 1989: 34).

Inspection by or on behalf of authorities external to the school is another aspect of this model's practical application. With this, judgements about quality and how far a school is achieving certain standards of performance are made by those who are deemed experts in the field. The Government's controversial reforms of the arrangements for inspecting schools in England and Wales (in which teams of registered inspectors tender for

school inspections) are justified in terms of the dramatic improvement they will make to the quality and quantity of information about education and, by means of this, to the quality of schooling. The new arrangements, the Government promises, will result in 'for the first time ever a Domesday Book-like survey of the quality and achievements of all England's schools...within four years' (Department for Education/Welsh Office 1992: 8). The role of parents (and parent representatives on school governing bodies) in applying the results of these inspections is an integral part of the rationale:

We will...have a substantial volume of comparative evidence about our schools to be made available to parents, governors and LEAs, as well as to the local community. This work will continue in four-yearly cycles...It will ensure that parents and others can compare the performance of all local schools in key aspects of educational activity. Every parent will be sent a readable summary of the full inspection report, governors will have to prepare action plans to follow it up and then report back regularly to parents on their progress (Department for Education/Welsh Office 1992: 8)

Thus the rhetoric envisages parent governors following up *applying* by taking action (a form of *doing* in the personal control empowerment model) and parents following it up by utilising the information to aid their choice-making (the competitive market model) and/or acting as a pressure group to ensure that action plans are implemented (which falls within the participative

model). Whether these aims are translated into reality remains to be seen.

The Participative Model

This relates to the third of the ways, referred to in the previous chapter, by which consumers can affect production, ie consumer influence. The participative model conceives consumers as exercising influence through dialogue and shared decision-making. Its scope is not confined to formal participatory mechanisms. It covers all the ways by which consumers convey their views to producers and seek to influence or take part in decision-making processes which affect production. It thus includes:

- individuals making complaints, suggestions or requests
- voluntary (local and national) consumer pressure groups (such as tenants' associations and CAMRA - Campaign for Real Ale)
- government-funded and statutory consumer bodies (eg the National Consumer Council, Advisory Committees on Telecommunications for each of the countries of the UK, Community Health Councils)
- consumer representation on decision-making bodies (such as parent governors on school governing bodies).

Interest in the creation of formal mechanisms whereby consumers could play a part in policy- and decision-making in the public services developed in the late 1960s and grew throughout the following decade in the UK. This period also saw a dramatic, worldwide increase in consumer advocacy groups (Richardson 1983: 3-4; Forbes 1987: 263). An assessment of

these developments in the OECD countries concludes that they represent significant progress in the representation of consumers' interests:

Of all the aspects of consumerism, the burgeoning of consumers' ability to have their interests represented in government, in regulation activities and with business has been its greatest gain. It will also be its greatest legacy to the future, because without representation, given the complexity of modern governments and the activities of special interest groups, consumers will take a backseat in the halls of governance...Consumer groups have gained experience and expertise in identifying issues, quantifying their magnitudes, and presenting feasible and workable solutions to both business and government. They are becoming ever more skillful in planning their resource use, setting agendas and having their views and ideas presented to the public (Forbes 1987: 309).

There are, nevertheless, important restraints on the capacity of consumer groups to articulate consumer interests, to be representative of large consumer populations, and to apply effective pressure on decision-makers. These restraints include paucity of finance and resources relative to many other interests, diffusion of consumer concerns across myriad goods and services (compared with, say, the greater capacity of a particular group of professionals to focus on its occupational interest), conflicts of interest amongst the large and diverse consumer populations (many of whom have

producer interests too), and the difficulties of organising consumers, as compared with businesses or employees (see Forbes 1987: 22-25; Ramsay 1989:13-24; Woods 1988a: 328). Richardson, in her analysis of consumer participation in public services, emphasises the *unpredictability* of the results of such participation and the difficulties in assessing its outcome. She concludes:

Because it entails bargaining between the new participants and the service-providers, and because their interests are to some extent (but not wholly) overlapping, the outcome of their interaction is not determined from the outset. Many different expectations can reasonably be held about who might gain from the introduction of participation. Even once it has been effected, its impact can prove difficult to assess. Participation, in sum, gives rise to many different expectations.

She observes further that the ‘ambiguity attached to participation has, however, helped to foster its own cause’ (Richardson 1983: 99).

To re-iterate, the participative empowerment model outlined here is not limited to collective or formal mechanisms for representation of the consumer interest (though these are the areas where major reforms have been instituted in the schooling systems in the UK and where the empirical work of this study has been focused). In the context of school education, the model can be seen operating in a variety of ways. These include:

- *Individual parents or families pursuing complaints in order to influence the schooling their child receives.* This may involve

parents taking their grievance to the school or they may take a case to higher authorities, including the courts. Recent examples of the latter include i) parents who sought and won the right to a judicial review after claiming that a council was breaking the race discrimination laws by forcing their daughter to take her lessons in Welsh (Western Mail 7th August 1991); ii) a father who challenged in the High Court the closure of a school because he wants his daughters to go to single-sex schools (Times Educational Supplement 28th June 1991).

- *Ad hoc collective action to effect change:* For example, parents and students of a private school who, discontented with the headteacher, called a meeting to air their grievances and press for change. This was followed by the headteacher's resignation and, as one parent was reported as saying: 'Now we will get what we have been paying for' (Gloucestershire Echo 13th June 1991)

- *Parent pressure groups:* Examples are parents' groups established in Warwickshire and Gloucestershire to oppose cuts in spending on education (Times Educational Supplement 20th December 1991), and Education First which was set up by parents in part of Wales who wanted to overturn a local education authority's policy on teaching in Welsh (Times Education Supplement 22nd November 1991).

- *Voluntary, school-based mechanisms to facilitate parental involvement:* Various types of groupings involving parents have been documented. The nature, scope and titles of these vary

according to the circumstances of the particular school concerned: school policy advisory group, home-school liaison committee, parents' consultative group, school policy group, home school council (Jowett *et al.* 1991: 167,179,187; Davies 1982; Templeton 1989: 61-77). All in some way are intended to advise or inform the school about parental views.

- *Statutory provision for parental participation in the running of schools:* This is the focus of this study - the involvement, underpinned by statute, of parent representatives in the government of schools.

Significant changes have been made in recent years in the opportunities for the latter kind of parental participation in England and Wales. The historical background to these reforms is sketched before some preliminary observations in light of this background are made.

The first schools in England were established by the Church in the sixth century. It was not until the fifteenth century that laymen began to be more prominent in managing schools (Taylor Report 1977: 141,143), though by the nineteenth century the Church remained prominent in the running of schools. In rural areas it was often only the parson who was actively interested in the school and the welfare of its pupils, whilst in 1884 a fifth of school managers in London were clergymen (Batho 1989: 1; Gordon: 1974: 114, 163). This active involvement of local clergy was usually because they were the people who 'had the time, ability and spiritual motivation to take up the often onerous and

routine administrative matters which are inevitably involved in the management of schools' (Bacon 1978: 13).

The religious element in the the control of schooling generally and on school management committees specifically was, however, a declining one. The Endowed School Act of 1869 reorganised the governing bodies of nearly 800 endowed schools so as to diminish clerical control. The 1870 Elementary Education Act, whilst giving direct grants to Church schools, gave the newly-created school boards the power to decide whether schools under their control should teach religion and provided that this teaching must be non-sectarian (Simon 1960: 319, 327, 328, 365).

The 1870 Act was intended to provide elementary education for all. It attempted to strike a compromise amongst competing views and interests by establishing a dual system consisting of (a) the voluntary sector made up of church schools receiving Treasury grants, and (b) locally elected school boards which could levy a rate for education and build schools where necessary (Simon 1960: 364-65; Batho 1989: 7). The 2,500 boards which subsequently developed varied greatly in size, from those having one small, rural school to those with a range of schools serving a population of more than 100,000 (Batho 1989:8). The elected school boards could delegate responsibilities to school managers (the then equivalent to today's governors) which were then appointed by them. Such delegation was characteristic only of smaller school boards and of Liverpool and London, both cities adopting a determined policy of delegation to local school

management committees. In other areas lay influence was strengthened through the emergence of officers, inspectors and clerks employed by the school boards, but this was at the expense of local participation (Simon 1960: 365; Gordon 1974: 136; Baron & Howell 1974: 9).

Managers were predominantly of professional and middle class status. In London in 1884, only 4.5% of school managers were working class, whilst the Liverpool School Board placed great emphasis on recruiting businessmen as school managers (Gordon 1974: 139,162). Efforts were made in the 1880s and 1890s (by individual working men and by groups such as the Labour League in Bristol) to gain working class representation on school boards in the major cities, with some limited success (Simon 1965:148-152).

Women were also under-represented as school managers, particularly in rural areas. Even in London the proportion of female managers amounted to only a fifth in 1884, though the percentage varied significantly between districts (from 11% in Southwark to nearly 50% in Marylebone). Women's social position shaped, and limited, the kind of participation they were able to have:

Because of the nature of the task [school management], which required a certain amount of leisure time, the work was carried on very largely by the wives and daughters of middle and upper class families. A characteristic of all types of female participation in this work was its short-lived and spasmodic nature. Family,

entertaining, travelling commitments and marriage accounted for much of this. This seems to have been true of both voluntary and school board membership (Gordon 1974: 181-2).

Women were often particularly concerned with social aspects of education (such as health) and with 'female' skills, such as sewing and needlework (Gordon 1974: 181-189). Not all were so confined, however. The Exeter School Board, for example, retained (uniquely) a ladies' committee which, whilst expected to supervise needlecraft, was able in time to expand its activities until by the beginning of the twentieth century:

a number of interesting innovations had been introduced by the committee, including an exercise in home-school relationships. Many of the Exeter schools were in the poorer district of the city, and the committee spent much time in home visiting. It was considered desirable to interest the mothers of pupils in the work of the children and successful evening meetings for parents were held in schools (Gordon 1974: 184-5).

Women managers came to be increasingly recognised as capable of making a specific contribution to school management. By 1902 the right of women to become managers had been securely gained - after the London School Board had endorsed the value of its women members and the law had been clarified to make it clear that women's continuing participation in school management was encouraged.

Governors of the schools which educated the children of the upper classes had been changing too during the nineteenth century. The Clarendon Commission (1861-64), appointed to investigate public schools, recommended amongst other things 'a ruthless and complete transformation of governing bodies' so that they would consist of 'trustees without pecuniary interest' and 'men conversant with the requirements of public and professional life and acquainted with the general progress of science and literature' (Mack 1941; Report of the Public School Commission). Public schools were changing and in the latter half of the century they no longer needed to recruit governors from the ranks of the local farmers or tradesmen but could

attract new members from the ranks of the nation's aristocracy including high church dignatories, Members of Parliament, representatives from Oxford and Cambridge, senior army officers, and even princes, earls and dukes (Bacon 1978: 8).

The notion that parents as parents (still less consumers) should participate in school management features little in the debates concerning control of schools. Yet concern about the rights of people to have their children educated in accordance with their religious beliefs was a significant issue; and much of the concern about the state of education, which gave rise to the Royal Commissions on education, arose from the perception that schools were not providing the kind of start in life that parents, particularly middle class parents wanted.

From the middle of the century it is possible to detect the emergence of a general, abstract notion of the importance of parental rights. In the early 1850s the Working Men's Association for Promoting Secular Education declared that for years religious interests have fought for control over the education of the people but that 'none of them have ever dreamed of ascertaining our opinions, or consulting our wishes, as to what should be done with our children' (Simon 1960: 342). John Stuart Mill in considering universal education and the role of the state wrote:

If the Government would make up its mind to require for every child a good education, it might save itself the trouble of providing one. It might leave it to parents to obtain the education where and how they pleased and content itself with helping to pay the school fees of the poorer classes of children, and defraying the entire school expenses of those who have no one to pay for them (Mill quoted in Lester Smith 1946: 40-41).

A former HMI, writing in 1869, argued forcefully in favour of parents as school managers on the grounds of the benefits this would bring:

The parents would begin to regard [the school] as an institution belonging to themselves in a great measure. Hitherto they have felt that it is the parson, or the squire, or the mill owner that is inviting them to one school rather than another; they have a notion that they

are in some way 'obliging' the managers of the school. Their attachment to a school in whose administration they have no concern is proportionately loose; and hence much of the evils complained of - apathy, want of co-operation with the teachers, irregular attendance, removal of their children for the most frivolous reasons (quoted in Gordon 1974: 175).

But it was not until the last decade or so of the century that a movement to involve parents as school managers could be observed. The Cross Commission (reporting in 1888) favoured some, limited parental representation - 'So long however as the parents are not a preponderating element, we should be glad to see them represented on the committee of management' - and in 1890 and 1891 bills were introduced in Parliament to facilitate such parental representation (though they were not enacted). The movement had been given impetus by the opportunities provided to a wider range of people to get elected to bodies like the county councils and school boards and by the findings of the Cross Commission. Between the passing of the 1891 Free Education Act and the end of the century 'there was a gradual and increasing appearance of parents on managing bodies' (Gordon 1974: 173,175). As the Bill which became the 1902 Education Act proceeded through Parliament, clauses were added that would have required parent managers. These, however, did not survive the Bill's passage (Gordon 1974: 180) and so, as the new local education authorities (LEAs) were established, the opportunity to underpin and extend parent representation by statutory entitlement was lost. The issue had not been of sufficient political

import to carry it through. The seal had been set on education becoming a national service locally administered by elected authorities with minimal opportunities for school-level participation.

The 1902 Education Act had the general effect of diminishing the importance of governors and managers and reducing opportunities for local people to participate in the running of their local schools (Bacon 1978: 28; Baron & Howell 1974: 10, 15-24). In contrast, the nineteenth century might be seen as a 'golden age' of local participation. By the middle of the twentieth century, in most areas of Britain (particularly the major cities) local participation in and control over schools was non-existent:

In places such as Sheffield, Manchester and Birmingham, no effective mechanisms remained to facilitate local involvement or control of the day-to-day affairs of schools, and education was in the main perceived by its clients as a commodity which was provided for them by an...administrative machine (Bacon 1978: 31).

Based on a study of governing bodies carried out in the late 1960s, Baron & Howell (1974: 193) saw them as 'on the periphery of the network of relationships that constitute the educational system' and as being 'without anchorage in any structure save that of the local education authorities to which they are subordinate and yet in potential competition'.

For a large part of the twentieth century many LEAs and headteachers were resistant to the notion of parents being school governors (Bacon 1978: 121; Baron & Howell 1974: 84-85, 221) - even though governing bodies were not particularly powerful. However, by the early 1970s a new trend towards parental involvement in school government could be detected. By 1975 more than 80% of LEAs allowed elected parent representatives to be full members of school governing bodies (Bacon 1978: 120). A survey of secondary schools in Wales, carried out in 1984, found that 99% had at least one parent governor and that three-quarters had at least two (Woods 1984: 11).

Decisive changes were brought about by the Conservative Government in the 1980s on the grounds that parents had insufficient influence on the schooling of their children:

The 1944 Education Act contained the principle that pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents. We have not yet given sufficient effect to that principle or allowed parents sufficient scope for discharging their unique responsibilities. Our education system is the poorer for this (Department of Education and Science/Welsh Office 1984: 1).

The majority enjoyed by LEA-appointees (ie governors appointed by the local education authority) was abolished and places for elected parents required by law. In county, controlled and maintained special schools parents have around a quarter of the

places, the exact composition varying according to the size of school (table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Composition of governing bodies in county, controlled and maintained special schools

number of pupils at school:	up to 99	100-299	300-599	600+
parents	2	3	4	5
LEA appointees	2	3	4	5
teachers	1	1	2	2
co-optees (<i>or in controlled schools:</i>)	3	4	4	6
(<i>foundation</i>)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(4)
(<i>co-optees</i>)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(2)

Note:

- the headteacher can be a member if he or she chooses.
- different requirements apply to aided and special agreement schools: amongst these requirements are that at least one governor is a parent.
- requirements also differ for grant maintained schools: their governing bodies need to include five parent governors, one or two teachers, the headteacher, and 'first' or 'foundation' governors.

Source: Lowe 1992: 20-22

The powers and responsibilities devolved to governing bodies by the 1986 and 1988 Education Acts include the following:

responsibilities for the curriculum ('everything that goes on in a school which results in pupils learning about the world around them' - Department of Education and Science 1988: section 11), managing the school's budget, hiring and firing staff (including the headteacher) and deciding school policy on charging. They also have rights to be involved in certain matters (such as exclusion of a pupil) and to decide, if they so wish, others (such as the school's general principles regarding discipline for pupils).

It is clear that as a result, a school's governing body has wide-ranging and important duties and powers. Parent representatives are a significant part of what is a key decision-making body in the reformed system of education. But does this represent consumer empowerment?

Historically, we can see that lay participation has tended not to be drawn evenly from all parts of society. We can also see that for the greater part of the twentieth century lay participation in school government has been moribund. This is the historical background to the expectation that parents will take, with their governor colleagues, the 'reins of power'. Putting parental representation in historical perspective also draws attention to the fact that the idea of *parent* representation in the running of schools is a relatively recent phenomenon, that it was revived after a lull of several decades, and that the rise of consumerism, and the conception of *consumer* participation, co-incided with this later revival.

Whether the achievement of parent participation in school government and the rise of consumerism was coincidence, an accidental congruence, or whether they are related in some way, raises a number of issues. Other countries had forms of parental participation much earlier - for example, parents' councils in German schools as early as 1919, and parent representatives on embryonic school management councils in France in 1945 (Macbeth 1984: 101,103). There may be pressures, other than a growing concern with strengthening consumer rights and influence, that prompt governments to legislate for parental

participation - Beattie (1985) concludes in his four-country study that it is associated with crises in the economy and political systems, and Macbeth (1984: 101, 107) links reforms in Italy and France facilitating greater participation with student riots in the late 1960s.

It would seem that the rise of consumerism is not a *necessary* condition for reforms requiring parental participation on the running of schools. Such reforms are linked with other, social and political, developments in society. This might be taken to suggest that the concept of parents as consumers in relation to school education is an irrelevancy. However, as I have sought to argue in Chapters 1 and 2, the conceptualisation of parents as consumers, and the need to clarify this, is a matter of some, contemporary importance.

What I believe the historical perspective highlights is that the congruence in England and Wales of radical reforms in parent participation and the widening adoption of consumerist perspectives and terminologies raises questions that have not been asked before. Are parents consumers? Can consumerist perspectives and terminologies develop to incorporate relationships inherent in a public service such as education? Does the concept 'consumer' inhibit our understanding of parent-school relations, or does it offer new perspectives that enhance our understanding? It may be that in the UK, because of its history and social conditions, reforms to promote parent participation could only be enacted once an ideology emphasising choice, competition and the consumer had gained political ascendancy

and was capable of challenging the conventional wisdoms of the education system put into place at the beginning of the century. The changes emanating from this reform offer an opportunity to analyse and test the notion of consumerism as never before. It constitutes a massive experiment, and the arguments in Chapters 1 and 2 highlight the fact that we do not have the conceptual tools to deal with this. Hence, we need to attain a more critical understanding of the notions of the consumer and of consumerism in order to understand and assess these reforms.

4. THE CONSUMER-CITIZEN IDEAL TYPE

The previous chapters argued that:

- conceiving users of goods and services, especially in relation to public services such as education, as consumers is problematic
- the problem is one of a narrowly conceived consumerism which emphasises the consumer as purchaser and as carrying out a limited range of activities (principally choosing and buying) and which ignores the consumer's activity as a member of a political community
- a broader conception is needed based upon the range of activities and experiences characteristic of consumers, ie an ideal type which is abstracted from consumers' activities and experience
- development of the concept of citizenship could not in itself provide the concept or conceptual framework needed
- four models of consumer empowerment and their associated consumer activities can be identified as a basis for the construction of the proposed ideal type.

The ideal type (the concept of the consumer-citizen, mooted initially in Woods 1988a) is intended to encapsulate and highlight significant aspects of people's role and position as users of goods

and services¹. The characterising elements, or dimensions², of the consumer-citizen ideal type are as follows (the first five - *choosing, doing, checking, applying, participating* - are each associated with one of the four models of consumer empowerment):

- *choosing*: making choices about what good or service to purchase or make use of (which school, which subject option, etc)
- *doing*: modifying, transforming or in part creating or providing goods or services
- *checking*: making sure that a good or service meets or is meeting the needs and preferences that the consumer-citizen himself or herself wishes it to
- *applying*: using standards and specifications laid down by authorities concerned with quality assurance (it can be seen as a

¹ An outline of the consumer-citizen conceptual framework, based on this chapter and the discussion in previous chapters, has been published in Woods 1993a. The framework has also been drawn upon in other papers (Glatter and Woods 1994; Woods 1994b, 1994d). The empirical work, reported in subsequent chapters, has been summarised in Woods 1994c.

² The consumer-citizen is a broad concept and, as Bryman and Cramer (1990: 66-67) argue, when this is so, 'serious consideration needs to be given to the possibility that it comprises underlying dimensions which reflect different aspects of the concept in question... [This] encourages systematic reflection on the nature of the concept that is to be measured'. The identification of these dimensions has assisted in specifying the nature of the consumer-citizen concept.

process of checking, but the emphasis is on making use of standards and specifications laid down by others)

- *participating*: all the ways by which consumers convey their views to producers and seek to influence or take part in decision-making processes which affect production

- *consuming*: this represents the pervasive activity of consumption itself, consisting of the act or process of utilising a good or service (which is not associated with any one model of empowerment)

- *acting as a member of a political community* (principally the state, but also super-national institutions such as the European Community): This can be sub-divided into *lobbying* (ie taking part in political activities by voting, standing for office or seeking to influence political authorities - which include local and central government, super-national bodies and politically-appointed bodies - through lobbying, writing letters and so on; *using the law* (ie drawing on statutory rights, such as consumer protection laws) to one's own advantage (note that utilising the law to assure specific quality standards comes under *applying* - see below), and *obeying* (ie following guidelines and instructions from political authorities where guidance is given or duties placed on the consumer-citizen, and generally acting as a 'dutiful citizen').

- *powerlessness/desire for more influence*, which denotes a relatively disadvantaged position with regard to power in relation to producers and other decision-makers (administrators and politicians). The history of consumerism, as noted, has been about measures intended to protect, represent and inform consumers in both the private and public sectors. This is not to deny that in certain instances consumers may be in a powerful position viz-a-viz producers (because, for example, there is a glut of a certain product on the market). However, in the ideal-typical construction of the consumer-citizen, the user is viewed as being relatively powerless.

Applying and *acting as a member of a political community* are closely linked. This is particularly so in the case of a publicly funded service such as the education system. Where public money is directed, the state tends to require conditions to be met for the granting of funds and can become the main provider, as with school education in England and Wales. Where the political community becomes the main provider, significant aspects of the quality standards and specifications about which *applying* is concerned are likely to emanate from political authorities and politically-appointed bodies. The distinction between *applying* and *acting as a member of a political community* hinges on the concern of the former with authoritatively laid-down quality standards. In the case of state-run service, such as that of education, it is concerned with the consumer-citizen utilising the law and guidance from political

authorities in order to ensure the service is reaching a quality as specified by statute or political guidance.

Acting as a member of a political community is concerned (aside from lobbying) with obeying (in ways in which service quality is not specified - examples include statutory obligations on parents to educate their children and on governors to meet a minimum number of times or to appoint a school's headteacher without defining the criteria they should use) and using general rights provided by law (for example, access to legally required LEA complaints procedures). The distinction may at times be fine. For example, governors are obliged by law to ensure the national curriculum is followed, yet the national curriculum is a relatively detailed specification of the main elements of a good quality school education. In this regard, governors can be seen as simply having to do as they are told or as being in a crucial position to ensure a certain, defined quality is reached: as implementing the law or making use of it.

In constructing indicators by which to measure the ideal type³, perceptions of the national curriculum (and of political balance in the school - another statutory duty which bears directly on the nature and, hence, the quality of the curriculum) are placed within the ambit of *applying*. This is because they define key elements of the quality and nature of schooling and are put forward as

³ see Chapter 6

safeguards of educational standards by the political authorities behind them. As definitions of quality, they may be contested - definition by a body with political authority (or indeed any other type of authority) does not automatically mean that the definition meets with the approval of consumer-citizens. This issue, and that of the relationship between *applying* and *acting as a member of a political community* will be raised again in the concluding chapter.

Let us turn now to the use that will be made of the ideal type. Ideal types are a means to ordering an inexhaustibly complex reality. They are theoretical constructions which are, to use Popper's succinct description of theories, inventions out of which 'we create a world: not the real world, but our own nets in which we try to catch the real world' (Popper 1978: 60). In Chapter 1 the importance in the Weberian perspective of the meanings and understandings people apply to their own actions was highlighted, as the key phenomena of sociological analysis. The dangers of ideal type construction remaining purely conceptual were also noted, and it was emphasised that theoretical type construction provides points of orientation for empirical work. The ideal type can be seen as a yardstick with which we can measure aspects of social reality (though there is no presumption that to be nearer the 'ideal' is better: the consumer-citizen is not intended as a normative ideal).

The theoretical construction - the ideal type of the consumer-citizen - must now be applied in empirical work. The ideal type is an abstracted description of people in their role as users of goods and

services. We need now to examine the extent to which the meanings and understandings of users resemble those of the idealised consumer-citizen. Following this empirical work, which involves exploring the perceptions of a group of (hypothesised) consumer-citizens, three broad outcomes are possible:

- the concept of the consumer-citizen, largely as it stands, is found to be a satisfactory and helpful way of conceptualising the role and position of parents
- the concept is found to require major modifications which, once made, will make it worthy of further use, testing and refinement
- the concept is found not to fit in any significant way parents' experience and should be abandoned.

There is a fourth possibility too. The three outlined above appear to imply that we are dealing with a static situation, that we will basically find something or fail to find it. However, social phenomena tend to be in a state of flux and constant movement. This point was drawn attention to in the discussion of the nature of the consumer-citizen as an ideal type: the phenomena in respect of which ideal types are used to provide a theoretical order are subject to growth, change and decay. Ideal types must be used and tested in light of this. They may, for example, pick out characteristics of aspects of social life as they are beginning to develop and spread, and as a result empirical analysis at such times may fail to confirm

the concept. Alternatively, an ideal type may be conceived at a time when the phenomena it represents are in an advanced state of decline. Thus it could be found that the concept is imperfectly reflected in reality (ie it fails to fit well) because the phenomena it represents are in the early stages of growth and development, or (conversely) in the later stages of decline.

In the following chapter, the focus for the empirical work (parent governors) is explained. In Chapter 6, methodological issues relating to this work are discussed, measurable indicators of the consumer-citizen concept's constituent dimensions set out in detail, the surveys undertaken described, and limitations in the method used and data gathered highlighted.

5. CHOICE OF PARENT GOVERNORS AS FOCUS FOR EMPIRICAL WORK

Although the theoretical construction which has been outlined draws extensively on the relationship between parents and school education, it is an empirical question as to how far and in what ways parents in practice reflect that idealised construction. The focus for the empirical work is, therefore, a group of parents.

Parent governors were chosen as the particular group to examine: a survey of parent governors was undertaken in 1988 and a follow-up survey carried out in 1992. Parent governors were chosen for two reasons. Firstly, the reform of governing bodies, initiated in the 1980s, constitutes a decisive change in school governance¹. It brings parent representatives into a key decision-making body within the school system. Prior to this, parent representation had been of little or no importance and the role of governing bodies since the beginning of the century had been of peripheral importance. Now, parents, *solely because they are parents*, have a formal role (underpinned by statute) in running schools and - in theory at least - are placed to be influential players in monitoring and shaping the education system that serves their children. Secondly, the thrust of these reforms can be seen as a dramatic manifestation of the broad notion of consumerism which is embodied in the consumer-citizen concept. We see in England and Wales a confluence of this decisive change in school government, on the one hand, and the

¹ Chapter 3, section 'The Participative Model'

widening adoption of consumerist perspectives and terminologies on the other². To these two reasons can be added my engagement, through work at the National and Welsh Consumer Councils, with Government policies on parental representation in the school system. This served to focus my mind on issues - both of principle and practice - raised by moves to enhance significantly the influence of parents.

Parent governors are an example of a phenomenon - consumer representation - that has emerged in the last thirty years as a feature of social policy and as relevant to virtually all public services (Richardson 1983). In terms of our theoretical construction, the reformed system of school government brings into the school decision-making process, a particular population of consumer-citizens - namely parents. These consumer-citizens elect from their number representatives to ensure that account is taken of their 'natural and special interest in their children's education and progress' (Department of Education and Science/Welsh Office 1985: 64) and to provide a 'strong voice' that will bring to bear parental influence on how the school is run (Department for Education 1994: 18).

Parent governors are, therefore, at the hub of a radical experiment (at school level) in consumer representation. They are, in terms of the theoretical framework developed in this work, *consumer-citizen representatives*, and are particularly interesting as a focus for study because of their distinctive and

² Chapter 3, section 'The Participative Model'

new position within the education system. But, what do they see as the appropriate scope of the influence that they are supposed to bring to bear? How do they rate their influence? The consumer-citizen ideal type provides a framework within which to explore these questions. Moreover, this conceptual framework suggests that they are likely to resemble that ideal type in their approach to school government.

However, the adoption of parent governors as the focus for empirical work raises several issues - because they are representatives in a decision-making body.

The representative character of parent governors means that they are in a different position viz-a-viz schooling than the generality of parents, ie they have a direct input into discussions, agenda-setting and decision-making at the level of school governance, and are seen (by virtue of the expectations, discussed below, which attach to them) as in some way bringing, through their presence and involvement, the interests of parents into governing body proceedings. The role of the *parent governor as parent governor* (or consumer-citizen representative as consumer-citizen representative) is, accordingly, not the same as that of *parent as parent* (or consumer-citizen as consumer-citizen).

The nature of representation has been much discussed in relation to democratic systems. The Burkean distinction between a representative and delegate is an oft-quoted one: in Burke's words, "Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgement; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he

sacrifices it to your opinion” (quoted in Arblaster 1987: 83). In this view, the representative is able (legitimately) to speak for others because they have *elected* him or her as their representative, not because he or she follows their specific instructions. But is election the only - necessary and sufficient - condition that renders a person to be a representative? Does not representation imply some other specific and/or continuing connection between representative and represented? One view, that posits a particular kind of connection, was expressed by Aneurin Bevan:

A representative person is one who will act in a given situation in much the same way as those he represents would act in that same situation. In short, he must be of their kind.... Election is only one part of representation. It becomes full representation only if the elected person speaks with the authentic accents of those who elected him... he should share their values; that is, be in touch with their realities (Bevan 1978: 35).

This begs many questions, nevertheless. For example, which values should the representative share with the represented? All or some values? Is it possible to identify certain ‘broad values’ that might be so shared, as distinct from more specific ones which may not be? How closely in touch with how many of the electors’ ‘realities’ must the representative be in order for there to be ‘full representation’? Underlying these questions is the issue of whether a representative needs to be, and can realistically be, typical of the represented: typicality implies that in some

significant ways the represented are homogeneous and that it is possible to have a person in a representative capacity who embodies those significant, shared characteristics.

An unavoidable characteristic of representative democracy is that electors surrender their individual participation in decision-making to a smaller number of elected people, on the grounds that continuous involvement of all is impractical (Beetham 1993: 63). Similar arguments may be applied to specific systems or institutions, such as education, within the state: that practicalities are such that, for example, parents have to 'give up' the notional idea of direct involvement by all parents in decision-making in favour of an inevitably diminished involvement through a minority of representatives. This leads to a focusing on the differences between representatives and those they represent - the *untypicality* of representatives. Parent governors are not typical in the sense that they tend to be white, professional and middle class (David 1993: 106-107, Golby 1993: 79). But, might it be that this bias is counteracted by the particular skills they are able to bring? It has been argued that:

... a good representative is *untypical* rather than typical. It is his capacity to be well-informed, articulate, confident at committee work, skillful at handling people and conscientious in contacting the parents whom he represents that matter more than how 'typical' he is... (Macbeth 1989: 129)

It would seem clear that representation involves some measure of interaction between representative and represented in order to keep in touch with the latter's values and 'realities'. In other words, it cannot be assumed that the representative is one of a homogeneous constituency, able to speak for the latter without ensuring two-way communication with those he or she represents. This was a point made, in the context of education, by the Taylor Report (1977: 37) and has been re-inforced in recent years by those involved in advising and training parent governors. Thus, for example, Sallis advises parent governors that they "have a duty to act with as much awareness as possible of the views of parents, listen as well as their situation allows, and keep parents informed of non-confidential matters which concern them" (Sallis 1991: 152), whilst Harding takes a similar view but grounds it in a consumerist perspective:

As consumers, it is vital that parents have an effective means of becoming involved in the school's policy-making. Parents have a significant stake in the well-being of the school and their wishes should be fully taken into account... The role of the parent governor is to represent the views of parents... (Harding 1987: 74).

There is evidence that parent governors themselves support the view that they should keep in touch with the body of parents that elected them, though in practice they find this difficult to do (Brigley 1990, Pascal 1987).

It should not be assumed that the social bias which is apparently present in the composition of parent governors is necessary to ensure the communication skills highlighted by Macbeth above; and, even if such skills are more likely to be found - or more readily developed - amongst the professional and middle classes, it still may be claimed that, where working class and ethnic minority and other significant groups of parents are unrepresented, the 'authentic voices' of these parents are absent. To complicate matters more, it might be further argued that even proportionate representation of key social groups (such as social classes) does not assure effective reflection of the represented: the range of perspectives within those groups may be large and, given,

the uniqueness of each individual, and given the gradations and shadings of opinion found even among those who are in broad agreement on a particular issue, representation.... must always be approximate and imperfect (Arblaster 1987: 85).

If representation in relation to the diversity of individual opinion is 'approximate and imperfect', the *structure* of representation (particularly within systems and institutions below the level of the state) can be designed, nevertheless, to reflect key interests. By key interests, I am referring to broad groups who, by virtue of their particular relationship with the system or institution (as employee or user, for example), can be demarcated and granted rights to involvement in decision-making. Thus, for example, the Webbs argued for the involvement of both 'citizen-consumers'

and producers (employees) in the decision-making processes of services and industries (Webb and Webb 1975)³. The Webbs saw responsibility for representing consumer interests resting with elected people (eg local councillors). As the consumer movement has developed, however, it has been considered necessary to ensure representation of the consumer interest as a countervailing influence to both producers and, in public authorities, elected officers. Industrial democracy schemes (involving representation of employee interests) should also include consumer representation to avoid a “carve-up between capital and labour” (National Consumer Council 1975: 1). Representation of consumers constitutes, as noted above⁴, one of the basic consumer principles which applies both to private markets and to public services (National Consumer Council 1983, Consumer Congress 1993, Healey 1994). In relation to public services run by elected politicians, consumer representation (via representatives and research on consumer perceptions) is justified on the grounds that those elected cannot know all they need to about consumers’ preferences and that consumer representation is an attempt to make democracy work more effectively (Potter 1988).

A further issue relating to parent governors as consumer-citizens is the extent to which they are distinctively *parental*, rather than

³ The Webbs refer to the “primeval cleavage of interest and purpose between the producer of a particular service or commodity and those who desire to use or consume it” (Webb and Webb 1975: 150). They also identify the continuing and overriding interests of the “whole body of citizens’ (not just immediate users) and of future generations. The ‘democracies of citizen-consumers’ is the generic term used by the Webbs describe both consumer co-operatives and local and state services run by elected representatives.

⁴ Chapter 3, section ‘Citizenship’

being simply governors with no fundamental distinction in terms of their role and responsibilities from other governors. In considering this, we might usefully distinguish between expectations and practical experience. As we have seen, a perspective that sees *parents as parents* as having a place on governing bodies is one that has come to prominence in recent years. If we pay heed to the intentions expressed in the Taylor Report - an important staging post on the route to reform - then "the first duty of parent-governors must be to represent the parental dimension of governance" (Macbeth 1989: 136). The specific reforms of the 1980s, providing a statutory basis to parent governors and enhanced powers for governing bodies, is the most decisive expression of this trend to date. Parent governors in an ideal typical sense are essentially concerned with identifying and representing the interests of parents: that is the rationale that has formed the context in which they have been given a statutory basis and their importance within the school system enhanced, and which underpins the kind of advice and guidance to parent governors from Sallis and others referred to above (that they should, for example, act with as much awareness as possible of the views of parents).

Recent research on the operation of the reformed governing bodies has taken as a starting point the model underlying these reforms, namely a shift of power towards "consumer governors": findings from this research suggest that parent governors may not bring to bear the kinds of parental interests or have the impact on decision-making that accord with the expectations of the model (Brehony and Deem 1990). Other research points to

an ambiguity in the position of parent governors: they want to represent the parent body, but the difficulties of doing so steer them towards working closely with the professionals (Brigley 1990). Experience in Scotland might suggest that parental pressure from school-level representatives is more likely to be exerted on national and local education authorities (Munn 1991): although this is not what the Government may have intended, such pressure can still be viewed as *parental* -

Having created a *parental* lobby through the establishment of school boards and through parental choice, government has had to live with the consequences of that lobby being used in opposition to its own policies [my emphasis] (Munn 1993:87-88).

In relation to schools, it is noteworthy that the vast majority (eight out of 10) of parent governors participating in the surveys reported in the following chapters believed that parent governors *do* make a contribution which is different from that of other governors⁵. Whether parent governors see themselves in practice

⁵ Chapter 8, section 'Perception of Parent Governor Role'. There was also evidence of strong links with parent-teacher associations (PTAs), which might be interpreted as giving parent governors an institutional base that specifically encourages parental involvement and provides a channel for communicating with parents: almost 4 out of 5 had been or were 'currently' (at the time of the first survey in 1988) involved with the PTA in some form or other (see Appendix A, section '1988 Survey: Distribution and Returns'). On the other hand, however, PTAs often involve only a minority of parents and may actually act to impede parental involvement (Macbeth 1989); and other findings from these parent governors suggest that they were not particularly pro-active in forging contacts with their constituency of parents - only a minority communicated with parents in writing or via specially-convened meetings. The majority said that they were in touch with parents by attending school functions, through the annual parents meeting or via the PTA meeting, and that parents could contact them whenever they wanted to (see Appendix A, section '1988 Survey: Distribution and Returns'). Parent governors may

primarily representing a distinctive interest, and at what level in the school system they seek to press that interest, is a matter for continuing empirical enquiry.

Finally, it might be argued that, by virtue of the wide-ranging decision-making powers and obligations that attach to them through membership of the governing body, the prime responsibility of parent governors is that of *providers*, rather than consumer representatives. This is closely linked with the issue, discussed above, of parent governors being representatives and, therefore, in a different position from the generality of parents. The concern that parent governors may be providers more than consumer representatives focuses attention on the capacity (and duty) of parent governors (in concert with their fellow governors) to *decide* on curricular issues, staff appointments and other significant policies and matters, and on the fact that this puts them in the position of being responsible for the running of the school. Such concern must be reinforced by the reluctance of Government to distinguish clearly between *governing* and *managing*, and to make it explicit that the latter is the provenance of headteachers (Morris *et al.* 1993: 93,120). AGIT (Action for Governors' Information and Training) has talked of 'building the governing body into an effective management team' (Holt 1991:94). Some governors take the view that

well have become more pro-active since 1988 as the new system of school governance has become established, but the extent to which parent governors in practice live up to the expectation of representing parents as a distinctive constituency remains a key question. We will return to this issue in the concluding chapter.

'Governors are to run the schools' - though these appear to be a minority (Golby 1993: 74).

There is a tension here between consumer-citizen representatives independently advocating a 'user' viewpoint and their implication, or complicity, in decisions made by the 'producer'. The danger is that the consumer-citizen may see himself or herself as concerned more with 'producer' issues (in this case the professional and managerial concerns of teachers and senior staff) than with ensuring that the deliberations of governors are informed by a strong parental voice. Parent governors acting in a representative capacity should be concerned with bringing that voice into governors' deliberations. The extent to which this may be eclipsed by their concentrating on producer perspectives is a matter for empirical enquiry: more needs to be known about the 'fine texture' and 'diversity' of parent governors' experience (Golby 1993:82).

The tension - between parent governors' role as service provider and as consumer representative - is not a simple one and raises more than empirical questions. It is a *conceptually* interesting distinction which is an integral part of the consumer-citizen framework. That conceptual framework recognises that the broad notion of the consumer - namely, the consumer-citizen - encompasses *doing*. It acknowledges that the consumer-citizen is - to a greater or lesser extent, depending on context and type of good or service - concerned with actively and creatively making and/or modifying that which he or she consumes. This is a recognition that the consumer-citizen possesses an inherent

tendency to 'stray' onto 'producer territory'. The consumer-citizen representative on school governing bodies is a formalised, statutory example of this: ie a consumer-citizen that is taken into decision-making which directly affects service provision. Thus, some measure of tension is built-in to the consumer-citizen concept. This, in itself, is not necessarily a problem, nor something to be avoided. In terms of the conceptual ideal type, the argument for this tension is that including the profile dimension *doing* reflects an aspect of the actual role and activities of the consumer-citizen.

It is also important, in approaching the study of parent governors to acknowledge a related tension - between 'ordinariness' and 'professionalisation'. In a report of a study of governors' perceptions of training, this has been encapsulated in the following terms:

On the one hand, governors are supposed to be the voice of everyday experience, a repository of common sense to be set against the professionals' alleged preoccupation with matters divorced from the 'real world', and a mechanism by which parents, community and industry can directly influence what happens inside schools. On the other hand, the tasks allotted to governors of financial, personnel and curriculum management would appear to require a degree of knowledge, skill and experience which, once acquired, might render their holder virtually indistinguishable from the professional (Waring 1992:77).

The issues that have been discussed above pose a question concerning the validity of using consumer-citizen representatives (parent governors) as an empirical focus for the consumer-citizen ideal type. Are they true consumer-citizens? The response to this hinges on an acceptance that they are in some meaningful way distinguishable from other governors and that the issues raised do not undermine fundamentally the 'consumer-citizen' character of their position.

To summarise, three points would seem apparent. Firstly, there are clear differences in the role of parent governors, as compared with the generality of parents, due to their representative role - and that representative role involves some measure of interaction between representative and represented. Nevertheless, parent governors can be viewed as examples of a distinctive 'key interest' group (consumer-citizens) acting in a representative capacity within a particular structure of representation. Secondly, the parental dimension of the parent governor role is an essential part of the expectations which attach to them, though the extent to which they carry out this in practice is a matter for empirical study. Thirdly, parent governors share responsibilities for service provision. This is not in itself incompatible with the consumer-citizen ideal type. However, they do run the danger of being compromised as consumer-citizen representatives, of 'going native' - ie becoming dominated by the concerns and perspectives of professional and managerial interests - and of becoming in some way 'professionals' themselves.

The first of these points has important implications: the representative character of parent governors has to be recognised and taken into account in formulating the items that might be developed as indicators of the constituent dimensions of the consumer-citizen ideal type, ie the indicators which are needed in order to operationalise the concept and to measure our survey respondents. The second and third need to be borne in mind in interpreting and discussing the significance of the empirical work. Further consideration will be given to pressures that work against parent governors acting as consumer representatives in the context of a discussion in the concluding chapter of how the survey data might suggest a tendency to 'incorporation', and the implications this has for the consumer-citizen ideal type.

6. OPERATIONALISING THE CONSUMER-CITIZEN IDEAL TYPE¹

This chapter charts an attempt to translate the theoretically-constructed ideal type into a means of measuring putative consumer-citizens and of testing hypotheses that are generated by the ideal type. The chapter discusses the following:

- issues of methodology
- measuring the consumer-citizen profile dimensions
- original and follow-up surveys of parent governors
- limitations of the method used and data gathered.

Issues of Methodology

The methodological issues discussed here are concerned with the specific attempt to operationalise the consumer-citizen concept by taking it into the 'empirical sphere' and utilising it in relation to a group of consumer-citizens. I am not describing here the overall methodology of the study. This is explained in Chapter 1, where it is emphasised that the primary thrust of the study is one of *theoretical construction* by means of a critical examination of the notion of the

¹ The empirical work with parent governors, reported in this and subsequent chapters, has been summarised in Woods 1994c.

'consumer' and development of an ideal type which will better 'fit' the role and position of public service users generally, and parents in relation to schooling specifically.

Below, general methodological issues are discussed, before turning in the remainder of the chapter to the details of the design chosen for the empirical work. This work consisted of a survey of parent governors undertaken in 1988 and a follow-up survey carried out in 1992. The discussion of general methodological issues expresses the framework of considerations that has informed the principles and practice of this work: in particular, it forms the backdrop for the key factors, outlined below, that shaped the design of the empirical work and for reflections on its limitations, discussed towards the end of the chapter.

Research methods are not about the application of fool-proof techniques. It behoves the researcher to disclose as fully as possible how he or she went about collecting data so that others may inspect the process and form their own judgements as to the merits of the claims made on the basis of that data.

What method amounts to...is making public (and therefore open to collective assessment and improvement) the means of doing research. By making explicit how research is done, reflecting on and discussing the strategies we use, we can come to conclusions (always tentative) about which strategies are more appropriate for particular sorts of purposes (Hammersley 1992:192).

This chapter, together with the appendices, is intended to make as explicit as possible the thinking and processes involved in the empirical work.

General issues

One of the major divides in research methods is that between quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection, with the former being a characteristic approach of education research from its modern beginnings and qualitative research coming to prominence later (from the 1960s onwards in Britain) (de Landsheere 1993, Atkinson *et al.* 1993). Quantitative approaches are often associated with hypothesis-testing, methods of investigation used by the natural sciences, positivism, capturing facts 'out there', establishing patterns and scientific laws, 'hard' data, statistics and numbers; qualitative approaches are often associated with exploring imprecise concepts, *verstehen* and empathising, peoples' own perceptions, definitions and 'stories', social life as a complex process and as a continually negotiated construction, 'soft' data, speech and text (Bryman 1988, Brannen 1992a). Quantitative approaches might be seen as having the advantage where variable categories are clearly defined, well understood and capable of being researched through relatively straightforward questions, whilst qualitative approaches may be preferred where 'the research issue is less clear-cut and the questions to respondents likely to result in complex, discursive replies' and where more 'flexibility, imaginative

input and reflexivity' is needed in exploring respondents' social worlds (Brannen 1992b: 5).

However, the divide between quantitative and qualitative research is neither so wide nor clearcut as the existence of the two research traditions appears to imply. Convincing arguments have been put forward showing that they can be used (with care) as complementary approaches (Brannen 1992b) and that many of the apparent dichotomies between them do not survive critical scrutiny. Hammersley seeks to show, for example, that the common association of quantitative research with a deductive or hypothetico-deductive approach and qualitative research with an inductive approach is a simplification:

Not all quantitative research is concerned with hypothesis-testing. Many surveys are straightforwardly descriptive, and some quantitative research is explicitly concerned with theory generation. Equally, by no means all ethnographers reject the hypothetico-deductive method. Indeed it seems to me that all research involves both deduction and induction in the broad sense of those terms; in all research we move from ideas to data as well as from data to ideas (Hammersley 1992: 48).

Hammersley goes on to argue that, rather than there being just two research paradigms from which to choose (or to combine), there are a variety of ideas, strategies and techniques. This variety (which stems from different philosophical approaches, political

commitments, practical circumstances, research purposes, etc) presents the researcher with a 'complex maze', not a crossroads where either quantitative or qualitative approaches have to be chosen.

Whatever approach is chosen, a number of problems confront the researcher. These include:

1) *Omitting to measure all that is important for the issue under investigation.* The researcher needs to give careful consideration to whether the research method and instruments of investigation are obtaining data on all of the most important factors relevant to the study. An illustration of this is given by Hammersley (1993). He subjected to critical scrutiny a study of gender imbalance in primary classrooms which focused on the *amount* of teacher attention given to boys and girls. Hammersley points out that this is likely to be less important for the issue of equality of opportunity than *types* of teacher attention, which, however, was not investigated by the study.

Anticipating what might be important for a study as it proceeds can be difficult. In addition, it is likely to be costly to try to measure all factors that might have a bearing. Decisions need to be made which as far as possible identify the factors which are likely to be most relevant and important for the purposes of the research and which need therefore to be covered. The difficulty of anticipating all the data that might be important to collect is particularly great where -

as with a study such as this - development of a theoretical framework is a process that overlaps the empirical work: the 'story' of this theoretical development, detailed in Appendix A, shows how available data was adapted and used to meet the needs of the consumer-citizen concept as it came to be developed during the study.

2) *Failing to measure what the research is intended to measure (validity)*. The question of validity is one of the most difficult problems in social research, for which it is said currently there is no adequate solution (Oppenheim 1986: 78). It is, therefore, dealt with somewhat more lengthily than the other general issues discussed in this section.

Defined by Moser (1967: 204) as 'closeness to the truth which one is trying to ascertain', validity raises a simple question concerning the research instrument the researcher is using: 'does it measure what you think it measures?' (Robson 1993: 68).

The question may appear deceptively simple. However, behind it are profound philosophical and epistemological issues relating to our assumptions concerning reality. The question carries with it a presumption that there is a reality that can, in principle, be known (realism), to which can be contrasted a view that researchers are engaged in constructing reality rather than representing it (Hammersley 1992). It is beyond the scope of this study to explore the arguments surrounding these issues, though it is not possible to

discuss the problems that empirical enquiries face without being aware of the tension between realism and 'constructivism'. This tension is, accordingly, also acknowledged below under 'researcher bias' and 'errors which occur during the research process'.

The question of validity is not, by and large, a simple one to resolve in pragmatic terms either. Where, say, a survey is concerned with factual issues (such as how much white bread people buy), questions aimed at eliciting this can be verified, at least in principle, by other means (for example, by directly observing the shopping habits of a sub-sample). Other issues, such as people's attitudes, pose much greater difficulties. In order to establish validity, some criterion is needed, ie an independent measure of the same variable to which the results of the researcher's investigation can be compared (Oppenheim 1986: 70). This might be provided by a 'criterion group' - a group of people (such as members of a political party) with known attitude characteristics - but behaviour (joining a party) is not necessarily a good indicator of attitude (Oppenheim 1986: 75).

These problems led to the development of what is termed construct validity which involves facing up to the fact that

we are trying to measure something that is beneath the surface, and we are trying to give this 'something' a more precise formulation by saying what sub-variables it pulls together and how it must be related to other attitudinal or

perceptual variables and to some aspects of behaviour (Oppenheim 1986: 76).

Cronbach and Meehl, who developed the notion of construct validity, in effect re-defined validity 'as the interpretability of observations/measurements in terms of the theory in which they play a part' (Bynner and Stribley 1979: 206). Construct validation takes place

when an investigator believes that his instrument reflects a particular construct...[and]...The proposed interpretation generates specific testable hypotheses, which are a means of confirming or disconfirming the claim (Cronbach and Meehl 1979: 225).

A key aspect of construct validity is that the theoretical construct in some way is connected to things that can be observed or measured and about which data can be gathered. Validation might be built up cumulatively:

one might validate a measure of socio-economic status by showing that the measure is related to certain types of attitudes and behaviours. As one finds that hypothesized relationships are supported, evidence for validity accumulates. When hypotheses are not upheld, either the instrument is invalid or the theories wrong. Through the collection of evidence over time, a case is built for the validity of measures,

which is dependent upon the theoretical models and hypotheses (Spector 1981: 14-15).

However, the meanings of constructs or concepts (such as social class or educational achievement) are not always precise - or capable of being expressed with a high degree of precision.

Other approaches to validation include seeking data from respondents which is rich, deep and characterised by a high level of candour (through lengthy, semi-structured interviews) or for the researcher to compare his or her findings with those of other studies in the same field (Oppenheim 1986: 76-78), or by the use of multiple strategies of field research (using more than one theory, method, set of data or investigators) (Burgess 1984: 144). However, as was clear in Chapter 2, the question of whether a concept such as social class is a meaningful one, even before measures are sought for use in empirical work, is a matter of keen and continuing debate, and is not a question that can be resolved by empirical research alone. This point equally applies to the concept of the consumer-citizen. Thus, the study reported here consists both of a theoretical argument that seeks to establish the case for the consumer-citizen ideal type as a theoretical construct, and an empirical piece of work that attempts to measure indicators of that theoretical construct. The empirical work has a measure of independence from the theoretical construction: for example, hypotheses are put forward which are capable of refutation in terms

of the data gathered². As is explained later, a quantitative approach was chosen which sought to present to parent governors a standard 'stimulus' (through questions posed in a self-completion questionnaire) in order to record and collate their responses.

A further type of validity is internal validity. This is concerned with the generalisation of conclusions within the study itself:

That is, given the structure of a particular investigation, can valid conclusions be drawn? In other words, can one state that the independent variable caused the dependent variable or are there confounding factors that prevent conclusions?

(Spector 1981: 18)

Internal validity may thus be concerned, for example, with whether a study has shown a causal relationship between an independent variable, say the introduction of testing, and a dependent variable, such as educational achievement (Robson 1993: 69).

Whilst much attention has been paid in the quantitative research tradition to the question of validity, there is also a substantial literature on the issue in relation to qualitative approaches (Schofield 1993: 107). One view, expressed below, indicates how

² See, for example, Chapter 7, section 'Mean Profile and Dimension Scores' in which the hypothesis that parent governors will show evidence of moving towards the consumer-citizen ideal between 1988 and 1992 is not confirmed by the survey data.

other problems (such as researcher bias and errors, discussed below) bear upon the issue of validity:

... qualitative research (no less than quantitative research) is subject to a variety of threats to its validity - qualitative researchers are liable to misjudge the frequency rate of certain behaviours that are of interest, they are likely to be unduly influenced by positive instances and not so sensitive to the significance of negative instances, they are likely to be unduly influenced or 'anchored' by experiences undergone early in the research, and so on. To achieve objectivity within a paradigm, then, the researcher has to ensure that his or her work is free from these problems, and again the presence of a critical tradition is the best safeguard. When work is sent to blind peer review, when researchers are forced to answer their critics, when researchers are supposed to be acquainted with the methodological and substantive literature (and when others can point out when they are not), and when researchers try honestly to refute their own dearly held beliefs, then bias and the other obvious shortcomings are likely to be eliminated, and the judgement (or judgements) reached by the community of scholars should be objective in the relevant sense (Phillips 1993: 69).

The existence of such a 'critical tradition', and the endeavours of researchers to work within it, are critical elements in striving for the goal of validity. Hence, as much as possible of the 'story' of the

theoretical development, as well as details of the empirical research, is included in this chapter and the appendices.

3) *Researcher bias*, or 'observer bias' (Robson 1993: 68). This represents the effects of the researcher on the means by which an investigation is undertaken and on the responses of research subjects. They can arise from his or her beliefs, values and theoretical framework which play a part in shaping the research instrument or which (with the addition of such factors as physical appearance and personality) may act as an additional variable in interviews or ethnographic research.

Expressed in this form, concern with bias appears to imply a simple belief in objectivity, ie that an objective study is 'not primarily about ourselves, but about the world itself' (Eisner 1993: 49). Yet it has been argued that in social science research, including educational research, objectivity is dead (Phillips 1993: 57). Certainly there has been a strong trend towards accepting as inevitable that researchers approach subjects of study from particular viewpoints (Robson 1993: 65, Lacey 1993, Gitlin *et al.* 1993), though the implications of some of the anti-positivist approaches have not gone unchallenged (Cohen and Manion 1994: 34-35). It is clear that researchers cannot approach their work without personal, cultural and theoretical frameworks and without disturbing, to a lesser or greater extent, the world they are seeking to learn about - even if it is (for example) to thrust a questionnaire before people who would otherwise have gone on their way uninterrupted and, perhaps, would not have

thought about the subject in ways that the questionnaire prompted them to do. The development of the consumer-citizen concept itself represents a choice about how to approach the social world: the concept is a (theoretically constructed) reference point which is meant to help us grasp the 'infinitely differentiated' mass of social phenomena³.

Understanding that researchers do have an impact upon the world they study and on research results that emerge does not mean, however, that *all* kinds of researcher-introduced bias are acceptable. The extent and effects of bias need to be reflected upon critically and biases which are avoidable, unnecessary and misleading eliminated as far as possible. Accordingly, the empirical work utilising the consumer-citizen ideal type attempts to specify indicators of the extent to which the research subjects resemble that ideal type. This, and the justification given for the indicators, encourages critical reflection by the researcher and opens the (claimed) manifestations of the theoretical construct to inspection and criticism by the academic community (as noted above).

4) *Different results emerging if the research were to be repeated (reliability)*. Concern with reliability focuses attention on the extent to which repeated measurements made on the same respondents by the same measuring instruments would get the same result (Moser 1967: 204). Reliability can be affected by researcher bias (discussed

³ Chapter 1, section 'Ideal Type Construction'

above), if that bias were to change over time, by researcher error (see below), and by 'subject bias' (for example, pupils making a special effort to do well in a test because they like the teacher administering it - a different result could emerge in that test if the pupils did not have the extraneous incentive of a teacher they like) (Robson 1993: 67-68).

These are arbitrary effects, emanating from the process of measurement. All of them could endanger the reliability of the empirical work involving parent governors. Researcher bias and researcher error are discussed elsewhere. The possibility of 'subject bias' is present, in that a different researcher, for example, could conceivably obtain a different result using the same questionnaire if (say) that person was known to be a representative of an LEA instead of a student researcher. Such bias is very difficult to test for, unless different researchers (and other possible extraneous factors) are deployed with different groups of otherwise-similar research subjects. This is not possible within the confines of this study. Other studies utilising the consumer-citizen concept are needed to establish consistency.

Of course, repeated measures may alter because that which is measured has changed - for example, it is entirely appropriate that surveys of political opinions record changes in support for political parties as that support shifts amongst the population; and with the consumer-citizen concept, data reported in the following chapter

suggest changes amongst the parent governors surveyed over the years between 1988 and 1992.

5) *Errors which occur during the research process.* These result from a variety of causes which include sample deficiency (in terms of its representativeness of the total population), incompleteness of the sampling frame, misclassifications during coding, mistakes in recording by the researcher, and mistaken or misleading responses by respondents (Hoinville and Jowell 1978: 5-6,30). Hoinville and Jowell elaborate on the latter:

Respondents may misunderstand a question, interviewers may make recording errors, answers may not be truthful: an obviously middle-class, middle-aged interviewer, for instance may cause some respondents to express views they do not hold; a rather severe interviewer may intimidate a nervous respondent and cause him to give incorrect answers; the respondent may want to create a certain impression of himself to the interviewer; he may feel certain answers are expected of him. Respondents also have a disconcerting habit of answering questions they do not understand, about subjects in which they have little or no interest, in a manner that confidently disguises their confusion or indifference (Hoinville and Jowell 1978: 6).

Many of these 'respondent errors' may occur when filling in a self-completion questionnaire, in the absence of an interviewer. Respondents, for example, may interpret a question wrongly (or at

least differently from what was intended by the researcher) or believe that the expression of certain views on the questionnaire form are expected of them. To an extent, this can be guarded against by careful piloting: hence, the questionnaires used in surveying parent governors were piloted prior to the original survey in 1988 and the follow-up in 1992⁴. Where parent governors involved in the pilot raised questions concerning the clarity of a question or appeared to understand a question in a way I had not intended, amendments were made to the question design to meet these points.

Errors may arise in qualitative work: through the kinds of mistakes and problems indicated above in interviews, and also through errors that can occur in carrying out other methods of investigation. Thus, for example, observation depends on the observed subjects not changing their behaviour as a result of the observation and on the observer making accurate recordings of events, behaviour, dialogue, etc.

What constitutes accuracy (absence of error) is not an unproblematic concept and its probing leads to issues concerning the nature of objectivity in social science already alluded to. As noted above, an approach which is contrasted with that of realism emphasises data as 'a social construct of the research process itself... a product of the skills and imagination of the researcher and of the interface between the researcher and the researched' (Ball 1993: 45). In this view, there is a need for rigour (rather than objectivity), by means of a reflexive

⁴ Appendix A

account of the conduct of the research which 'by drawing on fieldnotes and reflections, recounts the processes, problems, choices, and errors... upon which the substantive account is based' (Ball 1993: 45). The idea of inaccuracy is not completely jettisoned in this approach, but the emphasis is on research data as a complex construction in which the researcher plays an integral, unavoidable and active role. In the notion of 'subtle realism' - which seeks to overcome the dichotomy between realism and 'constructivism' - Hammersley argues that it requires researchers to be *more vigilant* regarding the dangers of error ('subtle realism' incorporates both a recognition of research accounts as 'selective constructions' and 'belief in the existence of phenomena independent of our claims about them... without assuming we can have unmediated contact with them...' - Hammersley 1992: 5, 50-52). Vigilance in relation to error - through checking codes when transferred onto computer, checking statistical figure work, and so on - was a high priority during the processing of empirical data.

6) *the extent to which the findings can be generalised from the subjects of the specific research exercise to the general population of those subjects* - also termed 'external validity' (Spector 1981: 18). The generalisability of results can be demonstrated through statistical inference, where a random or probability sample has been obtained (Moser 1967: 74-75, Hoinville and Jowell 1978: 56-88), through direct demonstration (for example, by carrying out a further study in a different setting), or by making a case (Robson 1993: 72). The

latter - making a case - is concerned with

persuading that it is reasonable for the results to generalize, with arguments that the group studied, or setting, or period is representative in that it shares certain essential characteristics with other groups, settings or periods (Robson 1993:72).

The issue of generalisability applies equally to quantitative and qualitative approaches (see Schofield 1993 for a recent attempt to confront the problem in relation to the latter). How far it is possible to generalise from the empirical data on parent governors is a question requiring great care so as not to make unjustifiable claims. This issue is broached towards the end of this chapter and in the concluding chapter.

7) *Practical constraints due to limited resources*. Johnson (1984: 6) observes that:

The fundamental principle of planning effective research is to match the research design to the resources available for its completion...

She goes on to argue, agreeing with Silvey (1975), that

a research plan is at best a compromise between the aims of the research, the resources available and the feasibility of the area of study (Johnson 1984: 6).

Resources include both time and money (Hoinville and Jowell 1978: 4-5, Robson 1993: 24). The research method or methods chosen for a study do not necessarily represent the best possible means of pursuing the investigation, but should at least constitute the best possible within the resources available and be adequate for the research task in question.

Key factors influencing the research design

In deciding upon the method to be used in the empirical work for this study, four factors were of particular importance.

Firstly, I had been engaged in a process of theory development (initially involving the development of a typology of participatory action, based on work by Macbeth, and later a more sharply focused concept of the consumer-citizen which incorporated this typology) and wanted to see how this related to a group of (hypothesised) consumer-citizens. This led to my thinking in terms of what (observable, measurable) indicators of consumer-citizen dimensions the theoretical construct would lead me to expect (this line of thought is akin to construct validation discussed above - ie measurement of a theoretical construction which is not directly measurable itself but which - it is hypothesised - lies 'beneath the surface' of attitudes, perceptions and behaviours that are more readily accessible to measurement).

Secondly, I believed that some form of quantifiable indicators would assist in thinking critically about the theoretical construct. Whilst there are arguments for pursuing a qualitative approach - for example, exploring a group of consumer-citizens' views about their activities and position by means of in-depth interviews - my concern was to generate hypotheses from the ideal type and to see how they might be measured and tested. These aims seemed to suggest that the administration of a standard stimulus to respondents would best meet the purpose of the empirical stage - through a questionnaire containing standardised questions by which 'you are strictly controlling the stimulus presented to all respondents' (Munn and Drever 1990: 4). Thus a survey, as the most appropriate way of seeking frequency distributions (Zelditch 1978: 122, 134), appeared to be a suitable approach.

Thirdly, restrictions in terms of the resources available for the work were an important factor. The chief restriction was time, and my belief was that a series of personal interviews or in-depth qualitative work would not be feasible within the time-constraints (due to my paid employment) within which I was carrying out the research. A more manageable approach was to administer self-completion questionnaires by post to a defined population.

Fourthly, when carrying out the first survey in 1988, I was of the view that it would probably need to be followed up in some way as in itself it would not yield sufficient data. Hence, respondents' names and addresses (where they were not already known) were

sought. At a later date, I decided that a repetition of the survey (giving the empirical work something of a longitudinal character) would be an interesting way of further pursuing hypotheses generated from the theoretical construction and would continue the approach of presenting respondents with a standard stimulus⁵. Although longitudinal (or cohort) studies have particular weaknesses, including sample mortality and the danger of 'measurement effect' (the process of repeated measuring affecting responses), they provide an opportunity to examine the development of characteristics or traits over time (Cohen and Manion 1994: 69-72).

Measuring the Consumer-Citizen Profile Dimensions

Statements or propositions that can be tested and possibly refuted needed to be formulated which derive from the question: do parent governors show the characteristics one would expect of them as consumer-citizens? These can be expressed in the form of a hypothesis which sets out the expectation in relation to the individual parent governor.

⁵ At the time of the 1988 survey, in order to allow the possibility of follow-up interviews, the questionnaire asked respondents if they would be willing to be interviewed.

Profile dimensions of the consumer-citizen

The expectation is that a parent governor will perceive his or her activity as a parent governor consisting of the characterising elements (dimensions) of the consumer-citizen ideal type, namely:

- A. Acting as a member of a political community
- B. Choosing
- C. Doing
- D. Checking
- E. Applying
- F. Participating
- G. Acting from a relatively disadvantaged position
in relation to others
- H. Consuming

As noted in the previous section, the representative character of parent governors has implications for the more specific expectations that need to be elaborated under each of the above dimensions when we seek to outline what it means, for example, to 'act as a member of a political community'. The main implications are twofold. Firstly, the dimension 'H. Consuming' is taken as a constant and as having no variation in measure (Bryman and Cramer 1990:63). This is because it was assumed that all parent governors are consuming state school education by virtue of the fact that they have children in their

respective schools⁶. It is not, therefore, included below in the development of a more detailed hypothesis. Secondly, account has to be taken of the representative role of parent governors and the view taken in the discussion in the previous section that representation involves some measure of interaction between representative and represented. Accordingly, the further elaboration of the consumer-citizen dimensions (A to F) needs to reflect aspects of this representative role in the activities specified under each dimension⁷.

This elaboration of the dimensions is set out below in the form of a hypothesis and is based on the theoretical construction outlined in the Chapter 4. For the purposes of the empirical work they together constitute the *profile* expected by the consumer-citizen ideal type and are termed the *profile dimensions*. The hypothesis in relation

⁶ This assumption is one that, looking back, it would have been advisable to check, since parent governors do not necessarily have children at their governing body's school - for example, where the child has moved on to another school but the parent governor chooses to serve out his or her term of office.

⁷ Thus, several activities are included which relate to the parents of the school, namely Aiv, Bii, Biii, Cii, Ciii, Dii, Diii, Eii, and Fii below. *Participating*, which is concerned with all those ways by which the consumer-citizen seeks to influence producers, whether by means of dialogue or directly taking part in decision-making, requires particular attention. Parent governors are intended to be one means of parents as a whole participating in the running of schools. If the focus of the empirical work had been parents generally, all parent governor activity and their links with parents could be seen as part of parents' opportunities for *participating*. However, in the case of the empirical work with parent governors *participating* concentrates on parent governors expressing views (which includes advising and communicating generally), and enabling parents to do the same.

to each parent governor is:

That he/she perceives his/her activity as a parent governor consisting of

A. Acting as a member of a political community, ie

- i) seeking to influence relevant polities
- ii) acting in accordance with guidelines/instructions from relevant polities
- iii) taking advantage of relevant laws and regulations to obtain the schooling service he/she wants (or believes parents at the school want)
- iv) seeking to involve the parents he/she represents in relation to polities (eg lobbying, seeking their views on matters such as grant maintained status prior to any statutory ballot)

B. Choosing, ie

- i) choosing between alternative producers or types of service
- ii) trying to provide parents with choices (eg subject options, times they can see teachers, etc)
- iii) trying to ensure parents are informed so they can make choices

C. Doing, ie

- i) making decisions about the schooling service (policy-making and/or day-to-day management)
- ii) directly modifying or providing aspects of the schooling service (eg teaching, carrying out maintenance)
- iii) trying to get the parents they represent directly involved in decision-making (includes communicating with, meeting, surveying parents) or in directly modifying/providing services (which includes parents going into school, eg to help with curriculum, or parents participating in teaching of their child in the home)

D. Checking, ie

- i) making sure that the school is meeting the standards and specifications that he/she believes it should
- ii) making sure that the school is meeting the standards and specifications the parents he/she represents believe it should
- iii) trying to ensure that parents are informed so that parents themselves are able to check if they wish

E. Applying, ie

i) ensuring that the school meets standards and specifications laid down by authoritative bodies (notably the polities under A above, but can also include independent organisations - such as churches concerned with religious education)

ii) trying to ensure parents are informed so that parents themselves are able to 'apply' in this way

F. Participating, ie

i) expressing his/her own views as parent governor to the governing body, head, senior staff and other decision-makers inside and outside the school

ii) enabling parents to participate in this way by informing them and/or creating opportunities for participation

G. Acting from a relatively disadvantaged position in relation to others, ie

i) perceiving the parent governor as less influential than other governors

ii) perceiving the governing body as a whole (and hence parent governors along with other governors) as lacking influence in relation to other decision-makers (professionals in school, politicians etc)

Issues in developing the research instrument

Before turning to a detailed specification of indicators of the consumer-citizen profile dimensions, some general issues relating to the design of questionnaires (particularly postal questionnaires) are outlined.

As Johnson (1984: 11) points out, 'The important point about research instruments is that they require development'.

Questionnaire construction is not the first stage in carrying out a survey, but follows 'many weeks' of planning, reading, design and exploratory pilot work (Oppenheim 1986: 24). The purpose is to ensure that, as far as possible, the questionnaire measures all the

factors most important for the study's purposes, is a valid and reliable instrument, does not reflect avoidable researcher bias, minimises the possibility of errors, and will yield generalisable results (by, for example, encouraging a high response rate).

Hoinville and Jowell (1978: 127-130) identify a number of characteristics important for a successful postal questionnaire. It should be:

- straightforward enough to be completed by people untrained and inexperienced in filling in forms
- not too long (no more than 8 to 10 sides of A4)
- attractive in appearance suggesting it will be easy to complete
- clear in its wording
- be of good design, meaning that it should
 - be simple
 - be type-set
 - ask respondents to tick boxes (rather than circle numbers)
 - sub-letter questions - eg 4(a), (b) etc - in long questionnaires
 - include explicit instructions
 - place more difficult questions in the middle or at the end
 - use wording which has been pre-tested
 - contain notes at the end, asking the respondent, to comment on the questionnaire, thanking them for completion and asking for prompt return

Certain types of question should be avoided (Cohen and Manion 1994: 93-94) - those which are:

- leading
- 'highbrow' - ie, too sophisticated
- complex
- irritating
- involving negatives
- open-ended

There is, however, an arguable case for including open-ended questions on postal questionnaires. Although such questions cannot be probed in the same way as is possible during interviews, they do allow a respondent to freely indicate their thinking on a subject and not always to be confined by pre-coded answers. This can help the researcher by providing a clue as to what is important to respondents in connection with the subject of study and in suggesting lines for further investigation.

The most important type of question for the purposes of the empirical work in this study (which is seeking to produce quantifiable indicators) is the 'closed' type. This allows a form of scoring to be used. However, Oppenheim expresses well a warning that questioning people is not like seeking out known and clearly-labelled items from the interior of their minds (as if unloading cargo

from a ship), but

is more like trying to catch a particularly elusive fish, by hopefully casting different kinds of bait at different depths, without knowing what goes on beneath the surface!
(Oppenheim 1986: 49)

‘Closed’ questions can be classified as follows (Oppenheim 1986, 81-102):

- **checklists.** These are a means by which a respondent can be asked to express a view by ticking one of a number of given options (for example, ‘very important’, ‘important’, etc) against different variables about which the study is concerned. They are best used to test specific hypotheses rather than as exploratory tools. They run the danger of omitting variables that are important to the respondent from the list and looking ‘impressive and ‘scientific’.
- **ratings.** These give ‘a numerical value to some kind of judgement... examples are school marks or grades and proficiency reports on personnel in industry’. They invite the gravest dangers and can be particularly misleading by providing a spurious air of accuracy and the appearance of being ‘hard data’.
- **ranking.** This involves arranging items or people in order, with regard to some common aspect. Examples include ranking children in terms of their school performance or paintings in terms of merit.

It is important to be clear about the purpose of the ranking and about the basis - the criterion - that respondents are being asked to make their ranking on. However, a vague ranking (of jobs, for example, on the basis of 'prestige') can be useful if that suits the purpose of the study.

- **inventories.** An inventory is a list that a respondent is asked to mark or tick in a particular way. An example is a list of personality traits or emotional feelings which respondents are asked to indicate those that apply to them. The items can be grouped in specified ways and scores computed for each respondent. It is preferable that this is done after careful pilot work, as with personality tests, though

since there are always problems for which no inventory has been devised, many people construct inventories and group items together on an a priori basis. In this way, they obtain a quick, relatively crude but useful set of measures, with reasonable reliability because of the use of area scores rather than single questions (Oppenheim 1986: 95).

- **indices.** These are very similar to inventories except that they usually consist of just one area. For example, an index of social adjustment (discriminating between those with a high level and those with a low level of social adjustment) by adding together the results of a question about number of friends, a question on

relations with the opposite sex, on work relationships, and so on. Without pilot work to develop these, however, there are problems:

the balance of the items is often poor, and in the end we have nothing but a few rather doubtful assumptions to sustain us. We assume that the items are related; we assume that we have made a representative selection of items to be included in the index; we assume that it will measure what we want it to measure and that it will do so reliably (Oppenheim 1986: 100).

On the other hand, practicalities may mean that pilot work is not feasible: there may be insufficient resources for it, the idea for an index may only arise after the survey has taken place or the research problem may be one for which measures and techniques do not yet exist. Thus:

It may boil down to a straight choice: either we make up an index without the necessary pilot work, or we drop the problem or hypothesis. In such a case, ingenuity would seem more justifiable than caution, for an index can always be refined and improved subsequently, once the first attempt has been made (Oppenheim 1986: 102).

Questions to parent governors, which were used as indicators of the consumer-citizen profile dimensions, can be seen as falling into

Oppenheim's categories. Some are in the nature of checklists⁸, whilst others ask for some form of ranking⁹. In addition, certain responses were grouped and treated as indices of a particular consumer-citizen dimension (the details of this are outlined below). The warnings in relation to the importance of pilot work and development are highly relevant and inform critical reflections on the survey methodology both later in this chapter and in discussions in the final chapter.

Notwithstanding the injunction expressed above by that replies should be ticked, it appeared to me that for the checklist questions circling of numbers by respondents would be most effective. No difficulties in this regard were raised by those who piloted the questionnaire. In other ways, the design of the questionnaire sought to meet the other criteria indicated earlier - such as simplicity and featuring explicit instructions. Reflections on how the questionnaire might be improved upon are discussed towards the end of the chapter.

Indicators of the profile dimensions

In order to use the consumer-citizen profile as a yardstick by which to measure parent governor perceptions, measurable *indicators* of its constituent dimensions are needed. The indicators derive from the

⁸ In particular, Q18 of the 1988 questionnaire and Q7 of the 1992 questionnaire (Appendix B)

⁹ Qs 23, 26 and 27 of the 1988 questionnaire and Qs 8,9 and 10 of the 1992 questionnaire (Appendix B)

early work of the study, in which major changes in the powers and duties of governing bodies and the involvement in parents in that were related to a typology of participatory action (which later became incorporated within the consumer-citizen concept). Details of this development are given in Appendix A (in particular, Figure A.2). This meant that data from the 1988 survey could be drawn upon as a means of quantifying the indicators as measures of a particular group of parent governors.

These indicators are concerned with parent governors' orientation to seven of the profile dimensions (A to G): they are intended to indicate the extent to which any given parent governor perceives each of the dimensions as appropriate in terms of their role as parent governor. More particularly, the indicators are concerned with what it is appropriate for governing bodies to do, general principles for evaluating the educational system, and the desire for more influence. They can be characterised as being about parent governors' *aspirations for the participatory structure* represented by the school governing body and are termed the *ASPIRATION INDICATORS (AIs)*.

Each AI is calculated using pre-coded answers to questions in the 1988 survey questionnaire. The questions used are summarised overleaf (the questionnaire is reproduced in full in Appendix B).

Profile dimension	Aspiration indicators (AIs) (summary of questions asked of parent governors)
A	appropriateness of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • representing the school's interests to the LEA
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rating of 'choice' as criterion for evaluating the school system (as compared with other criteria) • rating of statement that parents and pupils are consumers of the education service with rights of choice and redress (as compared with other statements)
C	appropriateness of decision-making activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • making changes to the school curriculum • keeping curriculum up to date • deciding policy on sex education • deciding general principles on discipline • deciding numbers and type of staff needed • directing the conduct of the school • managing the capitation budget • managing the whole school budget • selecting the headteacher • selecting new staff (other than the head) • disciplining and dismissing staff
D	appropriateness of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regularly evaluating the school • assessing the school's assessment/exam results
E	appropriateness of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring a balanced view of political issues is presented in school • ensuring the national curriculum is followed
F	appropriateness of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advising headteacher on the curriculum • advising headteacher on discipline • advising on the conduct of the school • preparing an annual report for parents • holding an annual parents' meeting • advising headteacher on spending • advising LEA on selection of headteacher • advising headteacher on staffing matters
G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • desire for more influence for governing body • desire for more influence for parent governors • rating of parent governors' influence (compared with other governors, clerk to governing body, headteacher)

Scoring of the pre-coded answers allowed a score for each dimension (in respect of each respondent) to be calculated on a scale from 1 to 4. A score of 1 suggests the parent governor perceives the dimension

as highly appropriate; 4 suggests a highly negative perception of that dimension. A parent governor most strongly resembling the ideal type consumer-citizen would score 1 on each dimension. Using these AIs, each parent governor in the survey can be measured against the consumer-citizen profile. By adding together the AIs for the dimensions, this measure is expressed as a single score for each parent governor: *the aspiration profile score (APS)*. It was possible to calculate an APS for 61 of the parent governors in the 1988 survey.

Subsequent to the 1988 survey a second set of indicators have been devised. These fulfilled two purposes. Firstly, they enabled a set of indicators to be devised which took into account the theoretical developments since the 1988 survey, namely the detailed construction of the ideal type consumer-citizen. Secondly, they were designed to focus on parent governors' actual activity under the conditions created by the reforms to school governing bodies (as opposed to parent governors' aspirations) and in this way to supplement the AIs. The second set of indicators consist of parent governors' perceptions of the extent to which the profile dimensions describe what they do as parent governors and members of a governing body, and the relative influence they wield. The ratings can be characterised as being about parent governors' actual *experience of the parent governor role* and are termed the *EXPERIENCE INDICATORS (EIs)*. Each EI is calculated using pre-coded answers to questions on the 1992 survey questionnaire. The questions used are summarised overleaf ¹⁰.

¹⁰ Further details are given in the appendices.

Profile Experience indicators (EIs)¹¹
 Dimension

Are the following good or poor descriptions of what you actually do as a parent governor and member of your school's governing body?

- A
 - try to influence political authorities (eg LEAs, central government) on educational matters
 - try to involve parents in influencing political authorities
 - follow guidelines and instructions from political authorities
 - use what the law says to your advantage, in order to bring about changes (eg the law on opting out, health and safety requirements, etc)
- B
 - choose between alternative suppliers (eg of cleaning services, advisory services, book suppliers, etc)
 - try to provide parents with choices within the school (eg curriculum options, times to see teachers, etc)
 - try to ensure parents are informed so they can make choices (either within or between schools)
- C
 - make decisions affecting the conduct of and education provided by the school
 - try to involve parents in decisions affecting the conduct of and education provided by the school
 - directly provide certain services yourself (eg helping with teaching, decorating maintenance)
- D
 - check the school is meeting the standards and providing the kind of education that:
 - you believe it should
 - parents at the school believe it should
 - try to inform parents so they can check the school is meeting standards and providing the education they want
- E
 - check the school is meeting externally-devised standards and criteria:
 - from central government (eg national curriculum)
 - from the LEA
 - from other bodies
 - try to inform parents so they can check the school is meeting externally-devised standards and criteria
- F
 - express your views to the governing body
 - give opportunities to parents to express their views about the school
- G
 - exercise less influence than:
 - the school's headteacher
 - the school's teachers
 - the school's other governors
 - national and local politicians

¹¹This is the actual text of questions asked of parent governors. NB the dimension codes in left-hand column did not appear in the questionnaire)

As with the AIs, scoring of the pre-coded answers allowed a score for each dimension (in respect of each respondent) to be calculated on a scale from 1 to 4. A score of 1 suggests the parent governor's activity within that dimension is close to the ideal described by the consumer-citizen profile; 4 suggests the parent governor's activity is not close. A parent governor most strongly resembling the ideal type consumer-citizen would score 1 on each dimension.

Using these EIs, each parent governor in the survey can be measured against the consumer-citizen profile. By adding together the EIs for the dimensions, this measure is expressed as a single score for each parent governor: the *experience profile score (EPS)*.

Original and Follow-up Surveys of Parent Governors

One of the key decisions in surveys is to decide on the population to be surveyed (Cohen and Manion 1994: 85; Hoinville and Jowell 1978: 4). Parent governors were chosen as the focus in this instance, for the reasons elaborated in the previous chapter. A random or probability sample of parent governors from throughout England and Wales was not feasible due to resource constraints. All of the forms of such sampling - simple random, systematic, stratified, cluster, stage (Cohen and Manion 1994: 87-88) - would have involved contacting parent governors from distant parts of England and Wales (even if the first stage sample had been of local education authorities) and, whatever form the sample took, seeking the co-

operation of geographically-spread local education authorities. For a lone researcher, the resources required for such an exercise would have been too great and the chances of obtaining the co-operation of all the authorities concerned and a reasonable response rate from parent governors geographically distant from me I perceived to be low¹². The logic of this argument was to confine the survey to areas local to my then home (Cardiff). I decided that a 'complete' survey (Moser 1967: 50) of parent governors in three districts of varying characters would be acceptable: all parent governors in the selected districts were to be included (an outline of the different characters of the districts is given in Appendix A, section 'Survey Areas'; information on the surveys, supplementing that given below, is given in Appendix A, sections '1988 Survey: Distribution and Returns' and 'The 1992 Survey').

The 1988 survey consisted of questionnaires sent out in July 1988 to all parent governors (totalling more than 200) in the Cynon Valley and South Glamorgan (which is made up of the districts of Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan). Sixty-six parent governors completed and returned questionnaires, a response rate of 29% (33% in South Glamorgan, ie 53 returned; 22% in the Cynon Valley, ie 13). The non-response rate meant that the outcome was an (in Moser's terms) an 'incomplete' survey

¹² I reasoned that people would be more likely to respond to a 'local researcher', given that the research was not a major national study or sponsored by an established institution.

APS scores were calculated for 61 parent governors and it is these who constitute the 1988 sample discussed in this and the remaining chapters.

The 1992 *survey* involved contacting as many as possible of the (61) parent governors in the 1988 survey for whom it had been possible to calculate an APS. A questionnaire was sent to 49 parent governors in June 1992 (addresses of the remainder were not available as contact in 1988 had been made via their school and they had not supplied their name and address on the 1988 survey questionnaire). Thirty-seven completed questionnaires were returned. The target had been to keep sample attrition to below 50%. This was achieved, the final attrition figure being 39.3%. Of the 37 who returned completed questionnaires:

- 16 were still parent governors at the time of the 1992 survey (the 'continuing parent governors')
- 4 were another type of governor at the time of the 1992 survey
- 17 had ceased to be a governor of any sort since 1988.

The data provided by the 1988 and 1992 surveys were used to explore two sets of questions. The first focused on the extent to which parent governors show the characteristics (as measured by the profile and dimension scores) expected if they are hypothesised as being ideal-typical consumer-citizens. Related to this central question are others such as: What relationships between the dimensions are evident? How has the APS score moved over time

(between 1988 and 1992)? Data pertaining to this set of questions are reported in Chapter 7.

The second set examines how variations in the APS and EPS scores might be explained by or be associated with other characteristics of parent governors. Are variations associated with social class or gender? Are APS and EPS scores associated with receipt of governor training, length of time as a governor, and so on? Data pertaining to this are reported in Chapter 8.

Limitations of Method Used and Data Obtained

Before reporting on the empirical data, attention is drawn here to some of the limitations of the research method used and the data gathered by means of it. A point fundamental to appreciating the nature of the empirical work is that the study was necessarily pursued (as a part-time higher degree) over a long period of time and that its essential aim - the development of a conceptualisation of parents in relation to schooling that moved beyond the notion of 'consumer' without discarding all aspects of that notion - took many years. The ideal type of the consumer-citizen was not a developed theoretical construction at the beginning of the study in 1985. The study did not, therefore, consist of 'translating' this construct into elements that could be applied in an empirical exercise. The study consisted of both theoretical development and attempts at empirical work which proceeded by means of a 'dialogue' (Chapter 1) between the two - a dialogue that was sometimes uncertain and unclear.

Hence, the flaws in the empirical work owe something to the very nature of the study and that fact that it was seeking to create a conceptual framework that was only available in a developed form near its completion. Having said that, it needs to be acknowledged that the study could have benefited from aspects of the empirical work being undertaken differently (these are highlighted in the concluding chapter). Below, key limitations of the empirical work are discussed.

The validity of the empirical work could be challenged from a number of standpoints.

Firstly, the particular group of subjects chosen for the empirical (ie parent governors) could be challenged on the grounds outlined in Chapter 5, which in summary amounts to a challenge that they are something less than true consumer-citizens. I highlighted three points:

- There are clear differences in the role of parent governors (as consumer-citizen representatives) as compared with the generality of parents;
- The parental dimension of the parent governor role is an essential part of the expectations which attach to them, though the extent to which they carry out this in practice is an empirical question;

- Parent governors run the danger of being compromised as consumer-citizen representatives and 'going native' - ie becoming dominated by the concerns and perspectives of professional and managerial interests.

The first of these was taken into account in designing the indicators and, in so far as this is an acceptance of a 'diminished' consumer-citizen status for parent governors, would represent a reduction of the validity of those indicators. In other words, they would, in part, be measuring something other than being a consumer-citizen. I would argue, however, that consumer-citizen representatives are no less consumer-citizens for being in that role, though their activities and attitudes in practice would need to be interpreted critically with an eye to the second and third points above: the theory of the consumer-citizen would lead us to *expect* that they resembled the ideal type, but the whole point of empirical enquiry is to see how near or distant they are from that ideal.

This, however, is not an argument that can be settled through theoretical elaboration (or at least not only through that). It has to be acknowledged that the empirical work would have benefited from including parents (equally hypothesised to be consumer-citizens) who were not acting in a representative capacity on governing bodies but were investigated in their position as 'ordinary' users of the school system. This would have helped in moving towards establishing valid indicators of the consumer-citizen.

Secondly, the pilot work intended to test and refine the questionnaire could have been more extensive. Piloting of a draft of the questionnaire was undertaken (prior to both the 1988 and 1992 surveys)¹³. However, in principle, a series of pilot surveys could have profitably been undertaken in order to develop indicators of the consumer-citizen dimensions - for example, to establish which questions and their responses correlated highly with each other within each of the dimensions (using techniques such as split-half reliability and Cronbach's alpha - Bryman and Cramer 1990:70-71), to try out different wordings of questions, and to see if a 'criterion group' of 'ideal' consumer-citizens could be identified in relation to which indicators could be validated. As was noted earlier regarding checklists, inventories, indices and the like, intensive pilot work is seen as of paramount importance. However, as was also observed earlier, where resources are insufficient or measures for the research problem do not yet exist, the researcher has the choice of going for 'ingenuity' rather than 'caution'. The survey on consumer-citizen dimensions, where both factors applied, sought 'ingenuity'¹⁴.

There are, accordingly, ways in which the aspiration indicators are less than ideal (problems being confounded by the fact that the

¹³ Appendix A, sections 'Development of 1988 Survey Questionnaire' and 'The 1992 Survey'.

¹⁴ A further limitation - the insensitivity (to variations of responses to individual questions) of statistical tests based on grouped data (ie the dimension and profile scores) - is noted in Chapter 7.

theoretical construction only became more sharply focused after the 1988 survey):

- A direct question on the appropriateness of *choosing* as a parent governor activity was not available on the 1988 questionnaire. Hence, questions on respondents' views on choice and narrow consumerist perspectives relating to school education were used.

- They do not fully reflect the range of activities that each dimension covers. For example, under C (*doing*) there is no reference to directly providing services (such as helping in the classroom).

- Answers to questions against dimensions A,C,D,E and F could reflect respondents' views on the particular issues concerned, not the general activity itself. A parent governor, for example, may not agree with decision-making on the issues itemised in the questions against C, but could want to make decisions in other areas.

Thirdly, the effective sample size was restricted as a result of a substantial non-response rate (in 1988) and sample attrition (in 1992). This affects the internal validity of the study as the aim was to survey the population of parent governors in a specified area. The non-response rate in the first survey was augmented by limited resources, lack of direct mailing addresses for most respondents, and a postal strike. Little was known about the characteristics of the non-respondents (the more known about them, the more it would

be possible to assess the affects of their absence on the effective sample). However, consideration of what conclusions might be drawn about them suggested that the effective sample over-represented primary school and church school parent governors and that, whilst professional and middle classes predominated, this probably reflected broadly the social composition of parent governors¹⁵. Although relatively small, the sample size was nevertheless sufficient for statistical analysis (Cohen & Manion 1994: 89/90) The sample attrition in 1992 resulted from sample mortality, which would be expected after four years, and the lack of direct mailing addresses in some cases. Even so, attrition was kept below the target set (which was devised after having studied an inventory of longitudinal studies¹⁶). Certain characteristics, as indicated in the 1988 survey, of those (24 in number) who were lost from the study were compared with those (37) who responded to the 1992 survey. Professional and middle class respondents (as classified according to their 1988 occupation) were more likely to be lost to the study than working class respondents (though the latter remain a minority of the 37). Parent governors of church schools were also less likely to be in the 1992 survey. There was little difference in terms of gender or type of school (ie primary or secondary).

Altogether the rate of non-response and attrition makes the drawing of conclusions within the empirical exercise less certain than it

¹⁵ Appendix A, section '1988 Survey: Distribution and Returns'

¹⁶ Appendix A, section 'The 1992 Survey'

might otherwise have been, and a task that has to be undertaken with particular caution - with conclusions being broad rather than implying narrow precision. This needs to be duly reflected in the discussion in the concluding chapter.

The approach might also be criticised in that it sacrificed 'depth', seeking rich and detailed data by means of qualitative methods, in favour of quantification. The reasons for this, outlined earlier, were my perception that the theoretical development would benefit from seeking indicators, in quantifiable form, of consumer-citizen dimensions, resource constraints, and (having undertaken a questionnaire survey in 1988) the benefits of repeating that survey. It might also be pointed out that the survey findings are not complemented by other methods of investigation, ie they are not set within a research programme that deploys multiple strategies of field research. The use of multiple strategies is one means by which researchers attempt to establish the validity of their investigations. This approach does not in itself assure greater validity - for example, sets of data generated by different research methods raise questions concerning the extent to which those methods are underpinned by different sets of ideas (about the nature of data, theories about the social world, etc) (Brannen 1992b). Quantitative and qualitative methods cannot be deployed together unproblematically. Nevertheless, I believe that different approaches would benefit the exploration of a concept such as the consumer-citizen, though it was not feasible to do so within the confines of this study.

There are ways in which the layout of the questionnaire might have been improved. I sought to keep its length to eight pages. In the 1988 survey, two A4 sheets were used together, folded in half, to form eight A5 pages. I considered that this would look least intimidating and easy to complete to would-be respondents. However, it did mean the questionnaire was relatively cramped - a factor that was not helped by the difficulty of fitting the questions I wanted to include on eight pages. In 1992 I chose to have a larger print and less cramped look by using A4-size pages.

The form in which some questions were expressed would benefit from further reflection and possible amendment. Whilst being mindful of the need to avoid the kinds of questions outlined earlier¹⁷, a few questions can be interpreted as asking 'two questions in one': for example, 'deciding *numbers* and *type* of staff needed' and '*disciplining* and *dismissing* staff' (in Q18 of the 1988 questionnaire and Q7 of the 1992 questionnaire - emphases added). These arose from the connection made between the theoretical development of the study and aspects of the education reforms introduced in the late 1980s (Figure A.2, Appendix A) and did not appear to cause difficulties in piloting the questionnaires. However, looking back it should be acknowledged that respondents could wish to answer differently for the separate elements of the questions and that this ought to be facilitated in the format of the question.

¹⁷ section, 'Measuring the Consumer-Citizen Profile Dimensions'

In addition, the fact that responses to questions have been aggregated for the purpose of statistical analysis means that the statistical tests used are not sensitive to variations in responses to individual questions (this is discussed further in Chapter 7, section 'Overview of Data and Statistical Tests Reported in Chapters 7 and 8').

Finally, there is the question of the extent to which generalisations can be made from this empirical work to the wider population of parent governors and, even more widely, consumer-citizens. The uncertainties (generated by the high non-response rate) of generalising to the target population of parent governors in the specified study area have already been mentioned. Even a near-complete sample of this target population would not have been a random or probability sample of parent governors in England and Wales. Extreme care in generalising to this latter population would in any case have been needed. Conclusions concerning consumer-citizens must bear in mind the questions relating to validity referred to above. These considerations re-inforce the point that this study is in the nature of 'generative' piece of work (Peshkin 1993: 28). That is, it is taking an original concept a certain distance by means of an attempt to use it in empirical work - producing insights, criticisms, and hypotheses and exposing difficulties in that new conceptual framework. Further work (beyond this study) is then needed to probe its potential and attend to its weaknesses. The results of the empirical aspect of this study should be interpreted with caution and seen as a staging post in theoretical development.

7. CONSUMER-CITIZEN PROFILE AND DIMENSION SCORES¹

Overview of Data and Statistical Tests Reported in Chapters 7 and 8

The basic hypothesis emanating from the theoretical construction of the consumer-citizen concept is that parents will resemble that ideal type. For the purposes of the empirical work, a particular group of parents, ie parent governors, was focused upon. Issues arising from differences in their position as compared with that of the generality of parents are discussed in Chapter 5 and the indicators of consumer-citizen dimensions acknowledge the representative character of their role². Thus, *it is hypothesised that parent governors will resemble the consumer-citizen ideal type, as measured by these indicators*: the reporting of data in Chapters 7 and 8 is underpinned by a concern to explore this fundamental hypothesis.

Respondents in the 1988 survey have an APS score only (termed from this point their *APS 1988* score). Respondents in the 1992 survey have both an APS score (their *APS 1992* score) and an EPS score (their *EPS 1992* score).

¹ A summary of the data reported in this chapter has appeared in Woods 1994c.

² see the hypothesis set out in Chapter 6, section 'Measuring the Consumer-Citizen Profile Dimensions'

In this chapter, data on APS 1992 scores are analysed for the whole 1992 sample and for the sub-sample of 16 continuing parent governors. These are referred to as *APS 1992(W)* and *APS 1992(PG)* respectively. The intention is that data on the whole 1992 sample will provide insights into the development amongst this group of parents of aspirations for participation, as the 1992 data will be compared with the 1988 data. It will be possible to address the question: In what ways have the aspirational profile scores of the 37 altered in the four years since they took part in the 1988 survey? At the same time, data on those who have continued as parent governors will be analysed, as the main focus of the empirical work is parent governors and in order to identify whether there are differences between current parent governors and those who have ceased to be parent governors.

Analysis (prior to the 1992 survey) of the APS 1988 scores suggested a number of hypotheses and trends which could be tested using data on the APS 1992 scores. These will be discussed and assessed in light of the available data.

With regard to the reporting of EPS 1992 scores, this will concentrate in this chapter on the 16 continuing parent governors - their *EPS 1992(PG)* scores. This is because they are able to base their replies on experience as parent representatives in the context of the reformed system of school government. Respondents' rating of this experience is of particular interest as the reforms are intended to bring about more active parental participation in the running of

schools. In addition, data from the non-parent-governor respondents will generally refer back to experience prior to 1988 and data from those who are currently 'other governors' reflects experience in their current capacity (in other words, overall data on EPS scores for the 1992 sample contain differently-based responses). Thus the reporting of data in this chapter is in respect of the following:

<u>Score</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>Number of respondents</u>	<u>Governor status at time of survey</u>
APS 1988	whole	61	parent governors
APS 1992(W)	whole	37	
		(16)	parent governors
		(4)	other governors
		(17)	non-governors
APS 1992(PG)	sub-sample	16	parent governors
EPS 1992(PG)	sub-sample	16	parent governors

Chapter 8 reports on APS and EPS scores broken down by respondent characteristics and perceptions. For this purpose the sub-sample of continuing parent governors is generally too small for meaningful analysis (though where this appears to be particularly relevant, the figures for this sub-group are reported). With regard to both APS 1992 and EPS 1992 scores, therefore, the whole 1992 sample is the normal basis for reporting in that chapter. Although the bases for experience differ amongst the 1992 sample, as noted above, the intention is to identify where there might be divergent experiences

associated with respondent characteristics and perceptions, and to suggest tentative conclusions or possible hypotheses for further research.

Much of the analysis of data involved comparisons between profile and dimension scores of different groups of respondents and over time. T tests of these differences were undertaken in order to assist in the assessment of their significance. T tests are particularly useful where a sample is small and may not be a normal distribution (Reid 1987: 100). As a general guide, a sample size of less than 30 is held by many researchers to be the minimum required for statistical analysis (Cohen & Manion 1994: 89/90).

The t tests were two-tailed. This is because in most instances I was interested to assess the significance of the differences in whatever direction those differences may be (ie I was interested in whether scores of one group were either 'greater than' or 'less than' another), rather than looking only for differences in one direction (Reid 1987: 101-102).

Three types of two-tailed t tests were deployed as appropriate to the data:

- 1) t test for correlated data (Cohen and Holliday 1982:190) - for testing the significance of differences between the 1988 and 1992 survey mean scores (see discussion below relating to tables 7.1). The data are treated as correlated because the two groups of

respondents, in 1988 and 1992, are the same and do not constitute completely different sample (Cohen and Holliday 1982:125);

2) t test for determining the significance of differences between the means of two groups of respondents (Cohen and Holliday 1982:233)

- see discussion below, following table 7.2, concerning EPS scores of 1992 sample, and discussion in Chapter 8 relating to the following:

- gender (tables 8.5, 8.6, 8.7, 8.8, 8.9, 8.10, 8.12, 8.13)
- time as governor (tables 8.14, 8.15, 8.16)
- connection with education system (tables 8.17, 8.18, 8.19, 8.20)
- location (tables 8.22, 8.23)
- type of school (tables 8.24, 8.25, 8.26, 8.29, 8.30)
- parent community (data reported in text)
- position in governing body (data reported in text)
- training and support (tables 8.31, 8.32, 8.33)
- problems in raising issues (data reported in text)
- perception of parent governor role (tables 8.36, 8.37);

3) one way analysis of variance (Cohen and Holliday 1982:257) - for testing the significance of differences between more than two means; followed, when appropriate, by use of the Scheffe S test to identify which of the means differ significantly; see discussion in Chapter 8 relating to the following:

- social class (tables 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4)
- location (table 8.21)
- type of school (tables 8.27, 8.28)
- voting behaviour (tables 8.34, 8.35).

The data which is subject to statistical analysis has been grouped for the purposes of constructing indicators of the consumer-citizen concept³. Responses to questions have been aggregated to produce scores for each respondent in relation to the consumer-citizen dimensions, and then these dimension scores have been aggregated in order to arrive at overall profile scores for each respondent. Generally, it is advisable to conduct statistical tests on 'raw data' (Reid 1987: 42), meaning, in this instance, responses to individual questions. The study would have benefited, as noted in Chapter 6, from a considerable period of intensive piloting - had that been feasible - involving a number of repeated surveys aimed at refining individual questions and their aggregation into indicators. Sensitivity to variations in responses to individual questions (ie statistical tests on 'raw data') would have been particularly helpful during such piloting.

However, in the practical circumstances of the study, the decision was taken to use indicators of grouped data, the composition of these groupings deriving from the theoretical development of the consumer-citizen concept and the data available from the 1988 survey. As a result the statistical tests reported below are not sensitive to variations in responses to individual questions.

The data are treated as interval/ratio variables in so far as parametric tests (in the form of the t-tests specified above) are

³ Chapter 6, section 'Measuring the Consumer-Citizen Profile Dimensions'

applied to them (Cohen and Holliday 1982:127). In strict terms, the data are ordinal (in that they indicate a rank order - Cohen and Holliday 1982:8-9). However, where there are a large number of categories (in this case, scores which range from 7 to 28 - see below), there is increasing acceptance that such data can be treated as interval/ratio data for the purposes of statistical tests (Bryman and Cramer 1990:65-66).

Range and Distribution of Profile Scores

A score of 1 on all the dimensions would result in a profile score of 7 (in the case of both APS and EPS scores). Thus 7 is the score closest to the ideal-type. The profile score furthest away is 28. Profile scores therefore all fall between 7 and 28.

Profile score distributions are shown in Figure 7.1.

APS 1988: The APS 1988 scores range from 9.8 to 21.45. Four 'outliers' scored more than 18, whilst six at the other end of the scale (scoring 11 or less) dip towards the consumer-citizen ideal.

APS 1992(W): The APS 1992 scores for the whole 1992 sample of 37 respondents range from 10.0 to 23.7. The five scoring more than 15 can be seen as 'outliers', whilst the dip at the other end of the scale is confined to two scoring less than 11.

APS 1992(PG): For the 16 parent governors in the 1992 sample, the range is 10.0 to 16.4.

EPS 1992(PG): The EPS scores for parent governors in the 1992 sample range from 10.65 to 19.55 (NB an EPS score could not be calculated for one of the 16 parent governors due to incomplete responses to relevant questions).

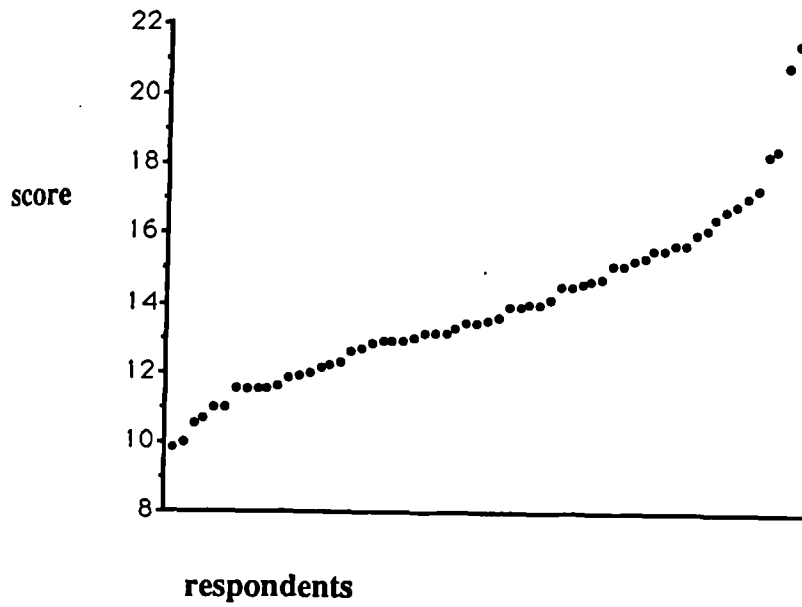
Two observations are prompted by inspection of the range and distribution of both APS and EPS scores, namely that:

- None of the respondents perfectly match the ideal-typical consumer-citizen
- Respondents can be seen as measurable on a *continuum* in which some are closer to the ideal-typical consumer-citizen than others.

If profile scores were spread evenly along the whole length of the continuum (from score 7 to score 28), a mean of around 17.5 would be expected. Actual APS and EPS scores (table 7.1) are significantly closer to the ideal end of that continuum. Thus it can be concluded that parent governors' scores tend towards the ideal score of 7, rather than towards the other end of the scale away from what is expected in terms of the consumer-citizen concept.

Figure 7.1: Distributions of profile scores

a): APS 1988



b): APS 1992 (W)

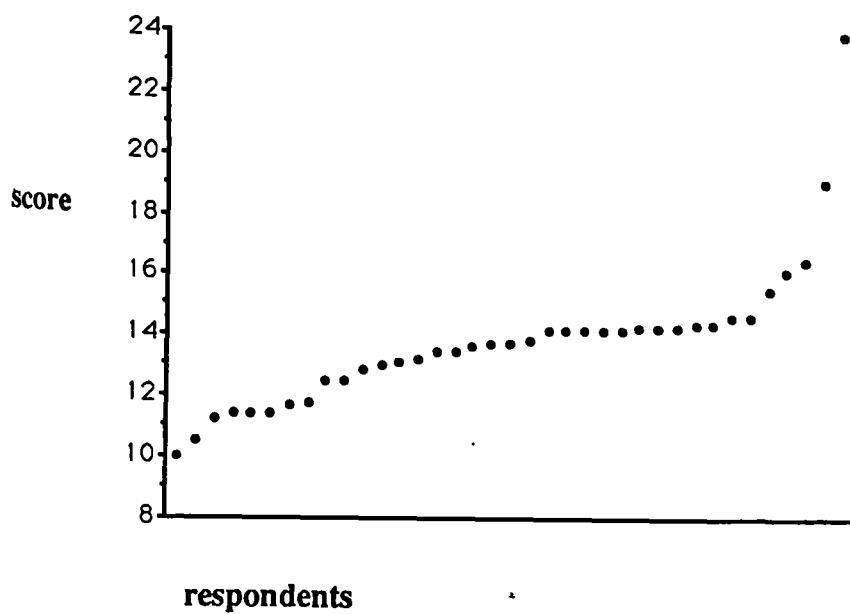
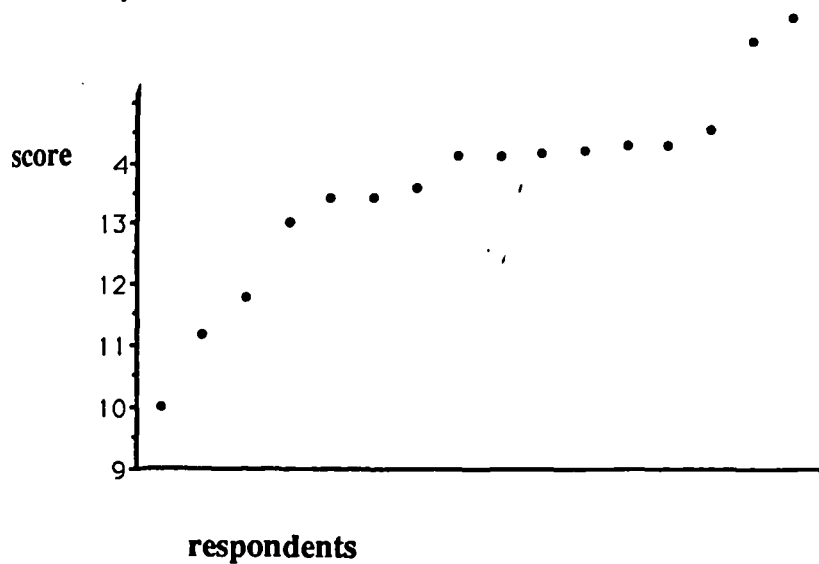
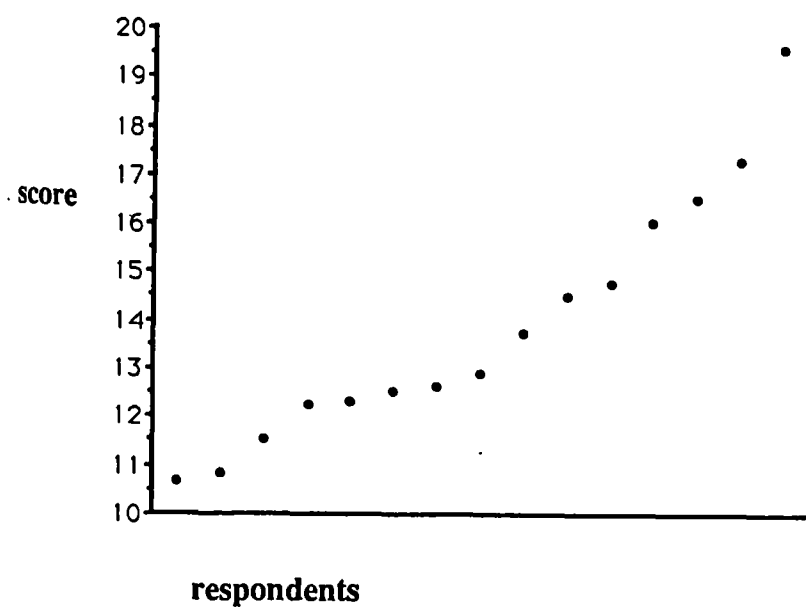


Figure 7.1: Distributions of profile scores (continued)

c): APS 1992 (PG)



d): EPS 1992 (PG)



Mean Profile and Dimension Scores

The mean APS score of the 1988 sample was 13.96 (base=61). One of the aims of the 1992 survey was to measure any change in dimension and profile aspiration scores, using the same indicators as in the 1988 survey. It was hypothesised, prior to the 1992 survey, that the reformed system of school government implemented since 1988 and the continued emphasis generally on consumerism and the Citizen's Charter (Cabinet Office 1991) in relation to public services will mean that *by 1992 parent governors will have moved closer to the ideal type consumer-citizen as indicated by their APS score.*

It was acknowledged, on the other hand, that what one researcher has termed 'governor burnout', resulting from the increased demands placed on governors (Johnson 1992), could suggest a tendency in the opposite direction.

In order to test the hypothesis, the APS 1992 scores of the 37 respondents in the 1992 survey can be compared with their APS 1988 scores. Table 7.1 presents these comparative figures, together with their respective mean aspiration dimension scores (ADS).

Table 7.1: Mean profile and dimension aspiration scores

	<u>APS 1992(W)</u>		<u>APS 1992(PG)</u>	
(Base:)	1988 mean APS (37)	1992 mean APS (37)	1988 mean APS (16)	1992 mean APS (16)
	13.50	13.77	13.73	13.66
	1988 mean ADS	1992 mean ADS	1988 mean ADS	1992 mean ADS
<i>acting as a member of a political community</i>	1.30	1.22	1.19	1.12
<i>choosing</i>	2.66	2.69	2.72	2.66
<i>doing</i>	2.07	1.89	2.09	1.67
<i>checking</i>	1.45	1.45	1.41	1.37
<i>applying</i>	1.90	1.61	2.09	1.59
<i>participating</i>	1.95	2.03	2.10	2.05
<i>powerlessness/ desire for more influence</i>	2.16	2.89	2.12	3.19

Table 7.1 shows the 1992 sample having moved away *from* the consumer-citizen ideal, from a mean score amongst those 37 respondents of 13.50 in 1988 to a mean score of 13.77 in 1992. This change is not statistically significant. For the hypothesis to be confirmed a statistically significant change towards the consumer-citizen ideal would have been required, and thus the findings appear not to confirm the hypothesis.

However, the data offer some interesting observations. Firstly, there is a noticeable difference between the change measured in *powerlessness/desire for more influence* and that for the other dimensions. The latter - the active dimensions - combined show a net change of 0.44 towards the consumer-citizen ideal. This is because the individual ADS scores show a fall (*acting as a member of a political community, doing and applying*), are unchanged (*checking*) or show very small movements away from the consumer-citizen ideal (*choosing and participating*). The change in *applying* is statistically significant for the 1992 sample as a whole ($p < 5\%$), whilst the change in *doing* is statistically significant amongst continuing parent governors ($p < 5\%$). The largest change is in the ADS score for *powerlessness/desire for more influence*: in 1992 this is 0.73 further away from the ideal consumer-citizen score. Thus the overall change in the APS score is accounted for by *powerlessness/desire for more influence*. Moreover this change in *powerlessness/desire for more influence* is statistically significant ($p < 1\%$).

Secondly, the mean APS score amongst the continuing parent governors has moved towards the consumer-citizen, albeit by a small margin (from 13.73 to 13.66), which again is not statistically significant. In their case, all but one of the ADS scores have moved in that direction (by a net 1.14). The exception is *powerlessness/desire for more influence* which shows a move of 1.07 away from the consumer-citizen ideal.

It can thus be observed that:

- The tendency was for change between 1988 and 1992 to be reflected not in overall APS scores, but in certain of the active dimensions towards the consumer-citizen ideal on the one hand, and in *powerlessness/desire for more influence* away from the consumer-citizen ideal on the other
- These divergent tendencies are most marked in those who continued as parent governors during that period: in their activities they moved markedly towards the consumer-citizen ideal, whilst their desire for more influence declined sharply (because, it might be hypothesised, their actual power and influence under the reformed system had increased).

Looking at experience, as opposed to aspirations, the mean EPS of the continuing parent governors was 13.85. The constituent EDS (experience dimensional scores) are set out in table 7.2.

Table 7.2: Mean profile and dimension experience scores

EPS 1992(PG)

	mean EPS (Base:) (15) 13.85
	mean EDS (Base:) (16*)
<i>acting as a member of a political community</i>	2.40
<i>choosing</i>	1.94
<i>doing</i>	1.97
<i>checking</i>	1.54
<i>applying</i>	1.73
<i>participating</i>	1.66
<i>powerlessness/desire for more influence</i>	2.53

(* except for *powerlessness/desire for more influence*, where the base is 15)

The figure of 13.85 compares with a mean EPS of 15.10 amongst those in the 1992 sample who had ceased to be parent governors since 1988. The difference is mainly accounted for by continuing parent governors being more likely to be *choosing*, *checking* and *applying*. The only difference that is statistically significant, however, is that relating to *choosing* ($p < 5\%$). The bulk of those who ceased to be parent governors left school government completely and were asked to answer the experience question in relation to when they had been governors. The difference therefore suggests

that parent governor activity now involves more choosing and that it may overall be moving in the direction of the consumer-citizen ideal (with *checking* and *applying* being particularly prominent in this change, as well as *choosing*).

A marked difference in the EDS score for *powerlessness/desire for more influence* might have been expected, with continuing parent governors being expected to score further away from the consumer-citizen ideal and thus more likely than 'ceased parent governors' to perceive themselves as influential. This expectation follows from a possible hypothesis to explain the change in ADS scores on *powerlessness/desire for more influence* identified above (which represents a reduction in desire for more influence), namely that it is due to the increased power and influence that the reformed system of school government is intended to bring about. In the event, the mean EDS score for continuing parent governors is more than that for 'ceased parent governors', but the difference is very small.

Correlations Between Profile Dimensions

A parent governor who matched the ideal typical consumer-citizen would, by definition, score 1 on each of the dimensions. Equally, at the opposite end of the scale the dimension scores would be a uniform 4. In other words, at the extremes the dimension scores would necessarily be the same. It may be hypothesised that this tends not only to occur at the extreme and that the dimension scores of any one parent governor will vary together in a more or less uniform way.

This hypothesis is not a necessary outcome of the theoretical construction. The ideal type is being used as a yardstick and, as such, it can measure the extent to which a parent governor's dimension scores vary in opposite directions. However, it is useful to set up a hypothesis against which to test the data, namely that *profile dimension scores for any one parent governor will tend to be similar*. If this is the case the scores of each profile dimension will correlate highly and positively with those of the other dimensions.

It might be argued, however, that one would expect a negative correlation between two of the dimensions: *powerlessness/desire for more influence* and *doing*. The argument would be that where a parent governor is highly active as regards the latter, he or she will display a low sense of powerlessness and desire for more influence. We would hypothesise in that case that *doing* will *correlate negatively* with *powerlessness/desire for more influence*.

The correlation matrices for each of the sample bases are shown in Figure 7.2. These four matrices produce 84 correlation coefficients, out of which only 21 indicate a modest positive correlation between two dimensions (defined as a coefficient figure between .39 and .70 - Cohen and Holliday 1982: 93). The highest concentration of these modest correlations occurs with the APS 1992(W) scores (nine of the 21 correlation coefficients indicate a modest positive correlation between two dimensions). The remaining 63 correlation coefficients indicate low positive or low negative correlations (except for one modest, negative correlation in relation to the EPS 1992(PG) scores).

Figure 7.2: Correlation matrices of profile dimensions

a) APS 1988

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
A	1						
B	-.097	1					
C	.057	.16	1				
D	.101	.155	.453	1			
E	-.001	.207	.365	.591	1		
F	.051	.119	.686	.459	.441	1	
G	.117	-.112	-.006	-.039	-.125	.083	1

b) APS 1988 (W)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
A	1						
B	.06	1					
C	.448	.403	1				
D	.468	.197	.647	1			
E	.226	.018	.48	.595	1		
F	.332	.176	.598	.461	.461	1	
G	-.198	-.177	-.213	-.104	-.082	-.18	1

c) APS 1992 (PG)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
A	1						
B	-.064	1					
C	.021	.487	1				
D	-.234	-.045	.271	1			
E	-.38	-.119	.444	.537	1		
F	.03	.362	.419	-.105	.35	1	
G	-.092	.006	.153	.107	.358	-.151	1

d) EPS 1992 (PG)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
A	1						
B	.254	1					
C	.603	.217	1				
D	-.188	.385	.293	1			
E	-.077	.023	-.03	.249	1		
F	.332	.036	.706	.38	-.056	1	
G	.069	-.05	.318	.112	-.585	.541	1

See following page for profile dimension codes

The modest positive correlations (ranging between .403 and .706) are in respect of the following dimensions:

APS 1988	APS 1992(W)	APS 1992(PG)	EPS 1992(PG)
	A x C		A x C
	A x D		
C x D	B x C	B x C	
	C x D		
C x F	C x E	C x E	
D x E	C x F	C x F	C x F
D x F	D x E	D x E	
E x F	D x F		
	E x F		
			F x G

A = acting as a member of a political community

B = choosing

C = doing

D = checking

E = applying

F = participating

G = powerlessness/desire for more influence

This data suggest that the first hypothesis above - that the profile dimension scores of any parent governor will tend to be similar - is not valid.

However, three inter-dimensional relationships are noteworthy as they have the highest correlation coefficients (.59 or above in at least one of the sample bases) and show evidence of persistence over time (through modest positive correlations in both 1988 and 1992). These are:

doing (C) and *checking* (D)
doing (C) and *participating* (F)
checking (D) and *applying* (E)

Doing and *participating* are particularly notable as far as parent governors' experience is concerned (their correlation for EPS 1992(PG) scores is .706).

The correlations between *doing* and *powerlessness/desire for more influence* are not consistent with the second hypothesis which suggested that they should be negative. The correlation coefficient for APS 1988, at -.006 (Figure 5.2a), suggested that no correlation existed. It was hypothesised following analysis of the APS 1988 scores that a group of consumer-citizens whose APS scores were markedly nearer to 7, ie closer to the ideal-typical consumer-citizen, would show a much greater negative correlation between these two dimensions. This is not borne out by Figures 7.2b or 7.2c: the former shows an increased negative correlation (-.213) associated with raw figures moving away from the consumer-citizen ideal, the latter a very low positive correlation (.153) associated with raw figures moving in the opposite direction. It appears, then, that the relationship over time between *powerlessness/desire for more influence* and the remaining dimensions (see discussion above relating to table 7.1) offers a more fruitful line of enquiry.

Differences Between Dimensions

Given that the dimensions do not vary uniformly, two questions can be posed:

- On which of the dimensions are parent governors most likely to approach the score of 1?
- Do certain dimensions account for variations in profile scores and, if so, which are they?

Table 7.3: Profile dimension mean scores

APS 1988 (Base) (61)	APS 1992(W) (37)	APS 1992(PG) (16)	EPS 1992(PG) (16*)
A 1.26	A 1.22	A 1.12	D 1.54
D 1.57	D 1.45	D 1.37	F 1.66
E 2.03	E 1.61	E 1.59	E 1.73
F 2.06	C 1.89	C 1.67	B 1.94
C 2.17	F 2.03	F 2.05	C 1.97
G 2.26	B 2.69	B 2.66	A 2.40
B 2.61	G 2.89	G 3.19	G 2.53

(* except for *powerlessness/desire for more influence*, where the base is 15)

A = *acting as a member of a political community*

B = *choosing*

C = *doing*

D = *checking*

E = *applying*

F = *participating*

G = *powerlessness/desire for more influence*

Table 7.3 shows the dimensions in rank order, descending from the score nearest the consumer-citizen ideal. A detailed exploration of these scores and the data underlying them is undertaken below: firstly in relation to aspiration scores, then in relation to experience scores. The extent to which the dimensions can be seen as being in a rank order is discussed in the final chapter.

Aspiration Scores

The scores most consistently near the consumer-citizen ideal are in respect of *acting as a member of a political community* and *checking*.

The AI question for the first of these referred to representing the school's interests to the local education authority (LEA). Over nine out of ten of the APS 1988 and 1992(W) samples (97% and 94% respectively) considered that this was appropriate for governors to do.

With regard to *checking*, the AI questions showed that 89% and 85% of the APS 1988 sample approved respectively of evaluating the school and assessing school assessment/exam results as governor activities. Both percentages rose to 95% for the 1992(W) sample.

These are followed by the activity of *applying*. As already noted, approval of this as an activity rose significantly between 1988 and 1992. The AI questions concerned ensuring the national curriculum

is followed and ensuring a balanced view of political issues is presented in the school, both statutory duties of governing bodies under the reformed system. Sixty-nine per cent of the APS 1988 sample, and 86% of the 1992(W) sample, considered that these were appropriate activities for governors.

Approval of *doing* also increased, making this the fifth most positively rated activity in the 1992 samples. The change was most marked amongst the continuing parent governors. There were 11 AI questions for this dimension:

	<u>approval rating</u>	
	1988 (base=61)	1992(W) (base=37)
deciding policy on sex education	80%	97%
selecting the headteacher	80%	95%
deciding general principles on discipline	85%	86%
selecting new staff (other than the head)	77%	84%
keeping curriculum up to date	69%	78%
disciplining and dismissing staff	61%	73%
managing the whole school budget	52%	70%
deciding numbers and type of staff needed	56%	68%
directing the conduct of the school	44%	68%
managing the capitation budget	57%	57%
making changes to the school curriculum	59%	43%

The largest increases in approval rating were registered for 'deciding policy on sex education', 'selecting the headteacher', 'managing the whole school budget' and 'directing the conduct of the school'.

Against the trend, the approval rating for 'making changes to the school curriculum' fell. By 1992 the range of approval ratings had widened from 80%-44% to 97%-43%.

By contrast, the mean ADS score for *participating* changed hardly at all between 1988 and 1992, resulting in its being overtaken in the 1992 survey data by doing. There were eight AI questions for this dimension:

	<u>approval rating</u>	
	1988 (base=61)	1992(W) (base=37)
preparing an annual report for parents	97%	92%
holding an annual parents' meeting	98%	89%
advising on the conduct of the school	70%	81%
advising LEA on selection of headteacher	82%	81%
advising headteacher on spending	52%	62%
advising headteacher on discipline	54%	59%
advising headteacher on staffing matters	49%	51%
advising headteacher on the curriculum	43%	32%

Most approval ratings remained broadly the same. Those for 'advising on the conduct of the school' and 'advising headteacher on spending' increased by ten percentage points or more, whilst approval for 'advising headteacher on the curriculum' fell. This resulted in the widest range of ratings (92%-32%) for any of the dimensions.

The dimensions furthest from the consumer-citizen ideal are *choosing* and *powerlessness/desire for more influence*. In other words, the sample was less likely (than with the other dimensions) to see making choices and narrow consumer perspectives as relevant to schooling. The AI questions on *choosing* were concerned with parent governor ratings of alternative criteria and statements about education (see Appendix A for further details). Asked to place in order of importance standards, efficiency, choice and equality as criteria for evaluating the school system, 5% of the APS 1988 sample placed choice first, 36% placed it second, 31% third, and 25% fourth (two did not respond). The respective proportions for the 1992 sample were: 11%, 22%, 30% and 38%. Asked similarly to rank three statements (one which viewed parents as partners, one which viewed parental involvement simply as a means to the end of better learning, and one which viewed parents as consumers), 16% of the APS 1988 sample put the 'consumer' statement first, 31% put it second, 41% placed it third, and 10% indicated that they did not agree with it at all (one did not respond). The respective proportions for the 1992 sample were: 16%, 24%, 54% and 2%.

In asking respondents to make such comparative ratings the relative position in which the *choosing* AIs are placed will depend to an extent upon the options with which comparisons are made. The question on criteria included four options which I considered to be the main alternatives underlying much of the debates about the education system. They were in the nature of key-words and it was

intended that the responses to these would reveal something of the weight parent governors attached to different ways of evaluating schooling. The question containing the statements was intended to reflect three contrasting perspectives on participation that I had outlined elsewhere: the *market-orientated* perspective which involves introducing the 'discipline of market forces into the provision of public services' and in other ways seeking 'to promote parent or consumer influence'; the *partnership* perspective which 'begins from the premise that the education of children is a responsibility shared between parents and others...[and] is an integral element in the process of education; not merely a means to any transcendent goal or claimed benefits'; and the *instrumental* perspective which 'values participation principally for the benefits it offers or is believed to achieve (better examination results, more effective homework, or whatever)' (Woods 1988a). The findings from both AI questions undoubtedly suggest that the 'consumer' and 'choice' options do not elicit the same support as other important ways of approaching schooling.

The AI questions with regard to desire for more influence consisted of parent governors' views on whether: parent governors should have more influence, their governing body should have more influence, parent governors are the (or one of the) groups with most influence. As noted above, the desire for more influence fell markedly between 1988 and 1992. Amongst the APS 1988 sample, 44% wanted more influence for parent governors, 43% wanted more influence for their governing body, and only 8% saw parent

governors as one of the groups having most influence in their governing body. The respective figures for the 1992 sample were: 14%, 24% and 32%. These suggest that desire for more influence for parent governors fell sharply and their perceived influence increased sharply, whilst desire for more influence for governing bodies registered a more modest decline.

Experience Scores

Five of the dimensions can be seen as the 'leading group' in terms of parent governors' perceptions of what they actually do as parent governors. These are listed in descending order, starting with the dimension with which they most strongly agree as describing their role. The EI questions are shown with the proportions of continuing governors (base = 16) who *agreed* that they were good descriptions of what they actually do as a parent governor and member of their school's governing body.

checking:

- checking the school is meeting the standards and providing the kind of education that,
 - you believe it should 100%
 - parents at the school believe it should 94%
- trying to inform parents so they can check the school is meeting standards and providing the education they want 94%

participating:

- expressing your views to the governing body 94%
- giving opportunities to parents to express their views about the school 81%

applying:

- checking the school is meeting externally-devised standards and criteria,
 - from central government (eg national curriculum) 69%
 - from the LEA 87%
 - from other bodies 75%
- trying to inform parents so they can check the school is meeting externally-devised standards and criteria 69%

choosing:

- choosing between alternative suppliers 56%
- trying to provide parents with choices within the school 81%
- trying to ensure parents are informed so they can make choices (either within or between schools) 94%

doing:

- making decisions affecting the conduct of and education provided by the school 94%
- trying to involve parents in decisions affecting the conduct of and education provided by the school 81%
- directly providing certain services yourself 69%

There is a gap between these five and the other two dimensions:

acting as a member of a political community:

- trying to influence political authorities on educational matters 37%
- trying to involve parents in influencing political authorities 37%
- following guidelines and instructions from political authorities 56%
- using what the law says to your advantage, in order to bring about changes (eg the law on opting out, health & safety requirements, etc) 81%

powerlessness:

exercising less influence than:

- the school's headteacher 62%
- the school's teachers 56%
- the school's other governors 37%
- national and local politicians 25%

Emerging Themes

Considering both the *aspiration* and *experience* rank orderings discussed above, three points are noteworthy:

- *Checking* emerges as the dimension activity that parent governors both want to do and currently are most likely to be doing.
- There appears to be a notable dissonance between the high approval rating of *acting as a member of a political community* and its low ranking in the order of what parent governors are doing.

- Parent governors appear not to rank themselves as lacking in power and influence to the extent that the consumer-citizen ideal type would expect.

Correlations Between Dimension and Profile Scores

In order to identify which dimensions account for variations in profile scores, the correlations between each dimension and the profile scores were calculated. Table 7.4 sets these out.

With regard to the aspiration indicators, four of the dimensions were found to correlate highly (.630 or above) in both the 1988 and 1992 samples: *doing* (C), *checking* (D), *participating* (F), and *applying* (E). These are the dimensions most likely to account for differences in APS scores.

Table 7.4: Correlations between profile scores and each of their constituting dimensions

APS 1988 (Base)(61)	APS 1992(W) (37)	APS 1992(PG) (16)	EPS 1992(PG) (15)
D .710	C .823	C .803	C .216
F .699	D .806	B .563	E .147
C .662	F .665	E .562	B .059
E .643	E .630	F .546	G .038
B .371	A .577	G .428	F .001
G .355	B .460	D .387	D -.041
A .308	G .052	A .106	A -.147

A = *acting as a member of a political community*

B = *choosing*

C = *doing*

D = *checking*

E = *applying*

F = *participating*

G = *powerlessness/desire for more influence*

However, these correlations do not hold for the sub-sample of 16 continuing parent governors. In particular, their APS scores showed an appreciably higher correlation with choosing (B), in comparison with the APS 1988 and APS 1992(W) samples. Also notable is the strong correlation between doing (C) and the APS 1992(PG) scores, at a similar level to that for the whole 1992 sample. This suggests that *doing* is a particularly significant dimension in determining the extent to which parent governors' aspirations accord with the consumer-citizen ideal type.

EPS scores and their constituent dimensions show much lower levels of correlation than APS scores. None of the experience dimensions is highly correlated. It is worth noting in light of the APS correlations, however, that the highest correlation figure was found between *doing* and the EPS 1992(PG) scores.

8. ASSOCIATIONS WITH PROXIMITY TO THE CONSUMER-CITIZEN IDEAL

Data were gathered in both 1988 and 1992 on respondents' social class, gender, location, type of school, length of time as governor, and connection with the education system. This was supplemented in the 1992 survey with data on respondents' integration with the local and wider community, perceptions of the parent community and voting in the April 1992 General Election. It was considered that these data were likely to throw light on characteristics which might influence parent governors' perceptions and their closeness to the consumer-citizen ideal type. Data were also sought in both the 1988 and 1992 surveys on receipt of governor training, views on the distinctiveness (or otherwise) of the parent governor role viz-a-viz other governors, and perceptions of the support given to parent governors. Respondents to the 1992 survey were asked, in addition, whether they had difficulties in raising issues that they would like their governing body to consider¹.

An explanation of the differing sample bases for the data and of the statistical tests used is given at the beginning of Chapter 7. Where associations are found to be statistically significant, differences in mean dimension scores are reported below in addition to differences in mean profile score.

¹ The order in which the data are reported in this chapter follows the classification - into 'resources', 'context' and others - of factors which could affect profile scores, discussed in Chapter 9, section 'Review of Empirical Findings'.

Social Class²

It might be hypothesised that consumer-citizens will tend to be drawn from the professional and middle classes (social classes 1, 2 and 3N). The argument would be that consumers from the 'higher' social classes are more likely to be active along the range of activities characteristic of the consumer-citizen by virtue of their possessing the cultural skills, knowledge and confidence to act in these ways - see Lareau's linking of cultural capital and social class (Lareau 1989: 176-180). Thus the following hypothesis could be formulated: that the *profile scores of professional and middle classes will tend to be higher than those of other social classes.*

On the other hand, our theoretical construction of the concept of the consumer-citizen might suggest otherwise. The concept is conceived as an aspect of major social changes in which the rise of consumerism and the diminishing influence of social class (and the decline, in particular, of the 'core working class', ie manual workers in industry) are significant elements. In this context it is arguable that the consumer-citizen is not characteristic of any particular social classes, or that it is not

² Social classes are based on the Registrar General's classification of occupations (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys 1980):

- social class 1 = higher professional (judges, chartered accountants, senior civil servants, doctors, academics, scientists, engineers, etc)
- social class 2 = intermediate ('lower' professionals -eg teachers, physiotherapists-managers, farmers)
- social class 3N = skilled non-manual
- social class 3M = skilled manual
- social class 4 = semi-skilled
- social class 5 = unskilled

associated with social class in any uniform way. Thus a hypothesis can be formulated as an alternative to the one above: that the *profile scores will not show a uniform tendency to rise, or conversely to fall, from social class 5 through to social class 1.*

The head of household's occupation was classified for 58 parents governors in the APS 1988 sample (the remaining three were unclassifiable from the information given in the questionnaire). Because of the small number classified as manual, social classes 3M, 4 and 5 were grouped for analysis purposes into a single 'working class' category (in fact all the respondents in this category were drawn from social classes 3M and 4). The mean APS scores are shown in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1: Mean APS 1988 scores by social class

social class	mean	respondents
1	13.21	24
2	15.31	17
3N	14.10	7
'working'	13.13	10
		<hr/> 58

Table 8.2: Mean ADS 1988 scores by social class

	1	2	3N	working
<i>acting as a member of a political community</i>	1.17	1.29	1.57	1.10
<i>choosing</i>	2.56	2.91	2.71	2.35
<i>doing</i>	2.09	2.40	2.21	1.99
<i>checking</i>	1.48	1.82	1.36	1.35
<i>applying</i>	1.92	2.44	1.86	1.75
<i>participating</i>	1.87	2.62	2.09	2.09
<i>powerlessness/desire for more influence</i>	2.12	2.18	2.29	2.50
	(n=24)	(n=17)	(n=7)	(n=10)

A one-way analysis of variance of the means indicates that the differences between social classes are statistically significant ($p < 5\%$). A Scheffe S test was used to find which of the means differ significantly. This indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between social classes 1 and 2, and between social class 2 and working class parent governors ($p < 5\%$). The difference between parent governors classified as 2 and 3N just fails to be significant at the 5% level.

These differences cannot be connected with any particular social class variations in ADS scores as none of these is statistically significant (table 8.2). It is interesting to note, however, that working class parent governors, compared to other social classes,

were more approving of *choosing* whilst less likely to want more influence.

According to this data, the propensity to approach the idealised consumer-citizen profile is not a straightforward function of social class. It is not associated in any uniform way with non-manual classes, as was suggested by the first of the hypotheses set out above. Nor do these figures support the proposition that parent governors in working class households are less likely to approach the consumer-citizen ideal. The findings, therefore, are consistent with the second of the hypotheses formulated above. Indeed, It is parent governors in the highest professional and managerial status and those from working class households who were closest to the consumer-citizen ideal in 1988.

One of the aims of the 1992 survey was to discover whether these findings would hold four years on. Table 8.3 shows the mean APS 1992 scores broken down by social class (33 respondents in the 1992 survey could be classified into social class groupings). Social classes 2 and 3N are combined as the numbers separately are too small for meaningful analysis.

Table 8.3: Mean APS 1992(W) scores by social class

(equivalent mean APS 1988 scores in brackets)		
social class	mean	respondents
1	13.22 (12.82)	16
2/3N	13.95 (15.36)	10
working	13.61 (12.46)	7
		<hr/> 33

The mean APS scores in table 8.3 show, as with the 1988 data, that social class 1 and the 'working' social class grouping tend to score nearer to the consumer-citizen ideal than the 'in-between' social classes. The differences are not statistically significant and comparison with the 1988 equivalent means in brackets (ie the 1988 APS means of the 1992 respondents) suggest a diminution in the differences observed in 1988. Nevertheless, the fact that there is no statistically significant difference between social classes is consistent with the second of the hypotheses outlined above, namely that the profile scores will not show a uniform tendency to rise, or conversely to fall, from social class 5 through to social class 1. As with the 1988 data, working class respondents scored nearer to the consumer-citizen ideal than other social classes in relation to *choosing* and further away in relation to *desire for more influence* (though, again, the differences did not reach the point of statistical significance): working class respondents had a mean ADS 1992(W) score for *choosing* of 2.36 compared with 2.66 (social class 1) and 3.05 (social class 2/3N), and a mean ADS 1992(W) score for *powerlessness/desire for more influence* of 3.14 compared with 2.56 (social class 1) and 3.20 (social class 2/3N).

As explained at the beginning of the previous chapter, data on EPS scores are generally being reported for the 16 continuing parent governors. These numbers are too small to make it worthwhile, in most cases, breaking them down by the characteristics under consideration in this chapter. It is interesting, however, to consider analyses of the whole 1992 sample EPS scores. Notwithstanding the differing bases for these scores (see previous

chapter), do their experiences differ significantly? Table 8.4 shows mean EPS 1992(W) scores broken down by social class.

Table 8.4: Mean EPS 1992(W) scores by social class

social class	mean	respondents
1	14.84	15
2/3N	14.81	7
working	13.85	7
		<hr/> 29

As with the APS 1992(W) scores, the experience scores show no significant difference according to social class. If the data suggest anything more than this, it is the possibility that working class respondents may be more likely to act in ways resembling the consumer-citizen ideal than the professional and middle classes.

The question of social class will be returned to after looking at differences according to gender.

Gender

There are no reasons arising from the theoretical construction to suggest that either men or women are more likely to resemble the ideal-type consumer-citizen. Arguments could be made either way. It could be argued that mothers are more accustomed to consumer activity and that, as mothers, they are especially concerned and motivated to be involved with their child's schooling. On the other hand, it might be contested that men are

more likely to seek leading or dominating roles, particularly in representative capacities such as that of parent governor. All of these arguments could be keenly debated, however (some of the issues relating to gender and the growth of significance in consumer activity were discussed in Chapter 2). It appears sensible, therefore, to propose that there is no difference between male and female parent governors, unless the data clearly suggest otherwise.

Table 8.5: Mean APS 1988 scores by gender

	mean	respondents
male	13.13	29
female	14.71	32
		<hr/> 61

Table 8.6: Mean ADS 1988 scores by gender

	male	female
<i>acting as a member of a political community</i>	1.21	1.31
<i>choosing</i>	2.69	2.53
<i>doing</i>	1.98	2.34
<i>checking</i>	1.47	1.66
<i>applying</i>	1.97	2.09
<i>participating</i>	1.82	2.27
<i>powerlessness/ desire for more influence</i>	2.00	2.50
	(n=29)	(n=32)

Data on gender were obtained for all 61 parent governors in the 1988 survey and the mean profile scores for male and female parent governors compared (table 8.5).

The difference between the means is statistically significant ($p < 5\%$ - just fails significance at 1% level). This appeared to suggest that male parent governors are significantly more likely to approach the consumer-citizen ideal than female parent governors. The dimensions (table 8.6) which largely account for this difference are *powerlessness/desire for more influence* ($p < 5\%$), *participating* ($p < 1\%$), and *doing* ($p < 1\%$). Hence it appeared from the 1988 data that female parent governors were less likely to want more influence or to approve of participating and doing as appropriate activities for governing bodies.

Table 8.7: Mean APS 1992(W) scores by gender
(equivalent mean APS 1988 scores in brackets)

	mean	respondents
male	13.13 (12.54)	17
female	14.31 (14.31)	20
		<hr/> 37

This difference was examined in the 1992 data to see if it held four years on (table 8.7). A marked difference was found, but it failed to reach the point of statistical significance. The difference had lessened, from a score difference amongst the 37 1992 respondents of 1.77 in 1988 to 1.18 (amongst the continuing parent governors, the fall in score difference was even sharper).

from 2.56 in 1988 to 1.27). As in 1988, the largest difference amongst the ADS scores was in relation to *powerlessness/desire for more influence*.

In terms of experience (table 8.8), a different picture emerges. Here male and female respondent scores are almost identical.

Table 8.8: Mean EPS 1992(W) scores by gender

	mean	respondents
male	14.49	15
female	14.57	18
		<hr/> 33

The findings suggest that male and female parent governors are more likely to differ in their aspirations than in what they actually do as parent governors and that there may be a trend to a lessening of any gender difference. They also suggest that female parent governors may not be so inclined as their male counterparts to want more influence.

Social Class and Gender Considered Together

As the above statistical analyses of the 1988 data were being undertaken, it appeared that a notable number of female parent governors from social class 3M households had relatively low profile scores (ie were relatively close to the consumer-citizen ideal). This was interesting, given the finding noted above that female parent governor aspirations were less likely to resemble

the consumer-citizen ideal. Might gender and social class be interacting in relation to APS scores? The data appeared to be suggesting a hypothesis along the lines that: *working class female parent governors are more likely than middle class female parent governors to approach the aspirations characteristic of the idealised consumer-citizen.*

The APS 1988 means are shown in table 8.9, broken down into two broad social class groupings: middle class (consisting of social classes 1, 2 and 3N) and working class as previously defined. The means differ significantly ($p < 5\%$). Working class female parent governors are more likely, on these findings, to be close to the consumer-citizen ideal (in terms of their aspirations) than their middle class counterparts. Almost a half of the difference between the mean APS scores is accounted for by two dimensions (table 8.10). Working class female parent governors were much more likely to approve of *choosing* ($p < 5\%$) and *doing* ($p < 5\%$).

Table 8.9: Mean APS 1988 scores of female parent governors by social class

	mean	respondents
middle class	15.48	21
working class	13.10	9
		<hr/> 30

Table 8.10: Mean ADS 1988 scores of female parent governors by social class

	male	female
<i>acting as a member of a political community</i>	1.38	1.11
<i>choosing</i>	2.76	2.17
<i>doing</i>	2.54	2.00
<i>checking</i>	1.76	1.39
<i>applying</i>	2.21	1.83
<i>participating</i>	2.39	2.04
<i>powerlessness/desire for more influence</i>	2.43	2.56
	(n=21)	(n=9)

Table 8.11 sets out the APS 1988 score means of the social classes broken down by gender. The small numbers of the resulting sub-groups limits the conclusions that can be drawn. However, visual inspection of the means of the male sub-groupings suggests the data is consistent with the proposition that male parent governors score more or less consistently across social classes. It is not possible, however, to compare male middle class and working class parent governors (as was possible with female parent governors) because the sample contains only one male parent governor classified as working class.

Table 8.11: Mean APS 1988 scores by gender and social class

gender: class	mean	respondents
male: 1	12.98	18
female: 1	13.89	6
male: 2	12.72	6
female: 2	16.72	11
male: 3N	13.62	3
female: 3N	14.45	4
male: working	13.40	1
female: working	13.10	9
		<hr/> 58

Further inspection of table 8.11 suggests that it is female parent governors from a particular social class (ie class 2) amongst the non-manual classes who are markedly less likely to resemble the consumer-citizen 'aspiration' ideal and are having a large effect on the female middle class mean score. Female parent governors in social class 1 are fewer in number and closer to the consumer-citizen ideal (though not quite as close as male parent governors in social class 1).

Looking at the data in tables 8.5 and 8.9, it can be seen that the mean APS 1988 score of female middle class parent governors (15.48) is markedly further from the idealised consumer-citizen than that of all male parent governors (13.13). The female *working class* parent governors' mean score is exactly the same as that for all male parent governors. In other words, it is the profile scores of female middle class parent governors (who predominate amongst the females) which result in the female

mean being further from the ideal than that of male parent governors.

Analysis of the 1988 survey data thus suggested the following possibilities:

- that the propensity of male parent governors to approach the consumer-citizen 'aspiration' ideal is not significantly affected by social class, ie class is irrelevant to whether male parent governors are more or less likely to resemble (in terms of their aspirations) the consumer-citizen ideal-type
- that social class is, however, relevant to whether female parent governors are more or less likely to resemble the consumer-citizen ideal type: specifically, the data suggested that a female parent governor from a working class household is significantly more likely to have aspirations closer to the consumer-citizen ideal type
- that the greater likelihood of male parent governors generally to be closer to the idealised consumer-citizen is largely a function of *middle class female* parent governors' propensity to be less close to that ideal in terms of aspirations.

Again it was intended to analyse the 1992 data to see whether these findings were apparent in 1992 as well. The smaller base provided by the 1992 survey limits the analyses that could be undertaken as numbers in the sub-groups would be too small. Where analyses were undertaken, differences were not found to

reach the point of significance. This was the case with the greater likelihood of male respondents to the 1992 survey to be closer to the consumer-citizen 'aspiration' ideal (table 8.7). Table 8.12 shows that the APS scores of female middle class and female working class respondents were almost identical, which suggests that there has been a shift since 1988. The aspirations of middle class females appear to have moved closer to the consumer-citizen ideal and working class females away from the ideal (numbers are too small to allow us reasonably to examine whether similar trends are evident in respect of the sub-group of female continuing parent governors). It is noteworthy, however, that the propensity for working class females to approve of *choosing*, noted in relation to the 1988 data, is also found in the 1992 survey: female working class respondents had an ADS 1992(W) score for *choosing* of 2.20 compared with 3.04 for female middle class respondents. This difference just failed to reach statistical significance but it was much greater than any of the other differences between female middle and female working class ADS 1992(W) scores.

In assessing their experience, female working class respondents scored much closer to the consumer-citizen than their middle class counterparts (table 8.13). Although the difference was substantial, the numbers involved were relatively small and it was not found to be statistically significant.

Table 8.12: Mean APS 1992(W) scores of female respondents by social class
(equivalent mean APS 1988 scores in brackets)

	mean	respondents
middle class	13.92 (15.44)	11
working class	13.98 (12.57)	5
		<hr/> 16

Table 8.13: Mean EPS 1992(W) scores of female respondents by social class

	mean	respondents
middle class	15.47	9
working class	13.35	5
		<hr/> 14

Involvement with Community

Data were sought in the 1992 survey on the extent to which respondents were involved in the community, both locally and further afield. The intention was to examine whether variations in profile scores were associated with the extent of this involvement. Interest in this possible relationship was engendered by consideration of recent debates about citizenship (Chapter 2) in which the notion of incorporation featured.

Respondents to the 1992 survey were asked whether they were currently, or had been in the last four years, a member of the following types of organisation:

any voluntary organisation
a political party or other political group
a church or other religious group
a trade union or professional association
Consumers' Association (ie subscriber to Which
magazine) or local consumer group
neighbourhood group (eg tenants' association,
Neighbourhood Watch)

Each respondent was given a 'community involvement score' according to the number of types of organisation that he or she was (or had been in the last four years) a member of. Scores thus could range between zero and six: six respondents scored one or less, 16 scored two, 15 scored between three and five.

If high community involvement is associated with closeness to the consumer-citizen ideal, it would be expected that community involvement scores would be negatively correlated with profile scores, ie that the higher the community involvement score the lower the profile score. In fact, the data suggest that there is no significant correlation. Correlating community involvement scores with profile scores produced the following correlation coefficients: 0.17 (with APS 1992 scores, base=37), 0.235 (with APS 1988 scores, base=37), and -0.003 (with EPS 1992 scores, base=33).

The indicator of community involvement used here is only one way of assessing such involvement and is limited in its scope.

However, it is clear that the findings do not support the proposition that proximity to the consumer-citizen ideal is associated with community involvement or incorporation.

Length of Time as Governor

In the 1988 survey, parent governors who had been a governor for 2 yrs or less had a mean APS 1988 score of 13.49 (base = 18), whilst those with more than 2 yrs had a mean of 14.15 (base = 43). This difference was not statistically significant. It was decided to analyse the 1992 survey data to see if these provided any indications that period of time as a governor affected profile scores: profile scores for continuing parent governors who had served two years or less in 1988 (hence six years or less by 1992) were compared with those who had served more than two years in 1988 (hence more than six years by 1992)³. The former are termed 'medium-term servers', the latter 'long-term servers'.

Table 8.14 shows 'medium-term servers' and 'long-term servers' virtually identical in terms of aspirations. The former appear to have moved away from the ideal, the latter towards it.

In contrast, there is a marked, statistically significant difference ($p < 5\%$) in experience (table 8.15). 'Medium-term servers' are

³ The question on the 1992 questionnaire concerning length of time as a governor did not provide straightforwardly usable data. Some respondents had changed schools and answered, it would appear, for the latest school only. Others answered for the whole period as governor at whatever school. In consequence, it was decided to focus on those who had continued to be parent governors and whose total length of service was thus known.

much more likely to resemble the consumer-citizen ideal in terms of what they do. The bulk of the difference is accounted for by three dimensions (table 8.16). 'Long-term servers' are much less likely to be *participating* ($p < 5\%$), and appear less likely to experience *powerlessness* and to be involved in *checking* (the latter two are not statistically significant).

Table 8.14: Mean APS 1992(PG) scores by time served
(equivalent 1988 mean in brackets)

	mean	respondents
medium-term servers	13.73 (12.99)	7
long-term servers	13.60 (14.30)	9
		<hr/> 16

Table 8.15: Mean EPS 1992(PG) scores by time served

	mean	respondents
medium-term servers	12.14	6
long-term servers	14.99	9
		<hr/> 15

Table 8.16: Mean EPS 1992(PG) scores by time served

	medium-term servers	long-term servers
<i>acting as a member of a political community</i>	2.36	2.43
<i>choosing</i>	1.73	2.10
<i>doing</i>	1.80	2.11
<i>checking</i>	1.26	1.77
<i>applying</i>	1.79	1.69
<i>participating</i>	1.14	2.06
<i>powerlessness/ desire for more influence</i>	2.08	2.83
	(n=7, except <i>powerlessness/ desire for more influence</i> where n=6)	(n=9)

Connection with the Education System

The 1988 survey data were analysed to see whether profile scores were associated with:

- possession of a teaching qualification
- a more general connection with the education system (which included teaching qualification, working in further or higher education, working as school secretary or dinner lady).

The hypothesis under scrutiny was that a 'producer connection' would make a difference to the kinds of aspirations that the

parent governor would have, as measured by the consumer-citizen profile dimensions.

Table 8.17: Mean APS 1988 scores by possession of teaching qualification

	mean	respondents
teaching qualification	14.63	10
no teaching qualification	13.82	51
		<u>61</u>

Table 8.18: Mean APS 1988 scores by general education connection

	mean	respondents
teaching qualification	14.05	20
no teaching qualification	13.91	41
		<u>61</u>

Tables 8.17 and 8.18 show that parent governors with a 'producer connection', especially qualified teachers, score slightly higher, ie further from the consumer-citizen ideal. However, these differences are not statistically significant. It was decided to analyse 1992 survey data to see whether the difference in APS scores between those with and those without a teaching qualification had changed, and whether there was a significant difference in terms of experience.

By contrast with 1988, the mean APS score of respondents with a teaching qualification is slightly nearer the consumer-citizen ideal (table 8.19). The difference is, nevertheless, not statistically significant. The 1992 data, therefore, appear to confirm that possession of a teaching qualification is not associated with variations in aspirations.

The experience of respondents without a teaching qualification is appreciably closer to the consumer-citizen ideal (table 8.20).

This difference again, however, does not reach statistical significance.

Table 8.19: Mean APS 1992(W) scores by possession of teaching qualification (equivalent 1988 scores in brackets)

	mean	respondents
teaching qualification	13.42 (13.77)	6
no teaching qualification	13.84 (13.44)	31
		<u>37</u>

Table 8.20: Mean EPS 1992(W) scores by possession of teaching qualification

	mean	respondents
teaching qualification	15.97	5
no teaching qualification	14.28	28
		<u>33</u>

Location

During analysis of the APS 1988 scores, it appeared that parent governors from the Cynon Valley (in the county of Mid Glamorgan) were more likely to be close to the idealised consumer-citizen ideal than those in South Glamorgan. The APS 1988 mean for Cynon Valley parent governors was 13.47 (base = 12), for those in South Glamorgan 14.07 (base = 49). Although this finding was not statistically significant, it raised the question of whether the kind of communities found in the Cynon Valley (ie older, established urban communities) might be a factor associated with variations on profile scores.

The difference found between Cynon Valley and South Glamorgan parent governors could not be accounted for by the social class or gender composition of the Cynon Valley parent governors (the proportions of female working class, social class 1 and male parent governors amongst the latter are not markedly different from the sample as a whole). It could be hypothesised that closeness to the ideal-type consumer-citizen is more likely to occur in older, established urban communities, which the Cynon Valley is. This would run counter to an argument (perhaps more consistent with the theoretical construction) that newer, more socially fluid communities would be more likely to generate the idealised consumer-citizen.

To explore these hypotheses, parent governors in the 1988 survey were classified according to their school location as being in an *older area* (ie areas mainly established prior to the First

World War and taken to include all of the Cynon Valley schools) or *newer area* (defined as all areas outside the older areas in South Glamorgan). Classifications were made using the researcher's knowledge of South and Mid Glamorgan. All special schools were excluded for this analysis because of their tendency to draw pupils from a wider area than the other schools; others could not be classified (either because it was not clear from the questionnaire which of two schools sharing the same name was relevant, or because the area could not be satisfactorily classified).

There was little difference between older (mean APS score 13.84: base = 33) and newer areas (mean APS score 13.22: base = 14). Separating the older areas of the Cynon Valley and South Glamorgan (table 8.20), it is clear that type of area (so defined) is not a factor associated with any particular variations in profile scores.

Table 8.21: Mean APS 1988 scores by community type
(parent governors at special schools are excluded)

	mean	respondents
older areas: Cynon Valley	13.21	10
newer areas	13.22	14
older areas: South Glamorgan	14.11	23
		<hr/> 47

It is evident that older urban areas are not as such associated with closeness to the ideal-type consumer-citizen. At the same

time, what these data suggest is that it is not just in newer communities that the idealised consumer-citizen is likely to develop.

The profile scores for the 1992 survey were analysed in the same way, though not broken down as between older areas in the Cynon Valley and in South Glamorgan since the overall number of respondents was smaller (tables 8.22 and 8.23). Again, there is no evidence that newer areas are more likely to beget aspirations closer to the consumer-citizen ideal as the differences in APS scores between the two types of area are relatively small. However, the data on experience do suggest that respondents in newer areas may be more likely to act, or have acted, as governors in ways that resemble the consumer-citizen ideal: the score difference in table 8.23 just fails to be significant at the 5% level.

Table 8.22: Mean APS 1992(W) scores by community type
(parent governors at special schools are excluded)
(equivalent 1988 mean in brackets)

	mean	respondents
older areas	13.72 (13.79)	23
newer areas	14.04 (12.86)	11
		<hr/> 34

Table 8.23: Mean EPS 1992(W) scores by
community type
(parent governors at special schools are excluded)

	mean	respondents
older areas	14.92	21
newer areas	13.75	10
		<hr/> 31

Type of School

Three hypotheses were examined in relation to type of school and the 1988 survey data: namely, that parent governors' aspirations at primary, church and special schools would be more likely to resemble the consumer-citizen ideal. It was felt that parents would tend to have a closer relationship with these types of school - primary schools because the children are younger and parents tend to have more contact with the school (eg taking their children to and from the school); church schools because their commitment to a particular religious education implies a special commitment and interest on the part of at least some parents at those schools; and special schools because of the special needs of the children and the involvement with the child that these require of parents. The argument is that these features, characteristic of parents at these types of school, will result in a more positive orientation to the consumer-citizen profile dimensions, and hence a lower APS score, than parent governors at other types of school.

1988 survey data indicated no significant difference between parent governors at primary and secondary schools: the mean APS 1988 score amongst parent governors on primary school governing bodies was 13.78 (base = 41), compared with 13.74 (base = 15) amongst those on secondary school governing bodies (one respondent served on both types of school and was included in each category).

Table 8.24: Mean APS 1992(W) scores by school type (I)

(equivalent 1988 mean in brackets)

	mean	respondents
primary schools	14.18 (13.64)	26
secondary schools	12.71 (13.51)	17
		<hr/> 43 (*see overleaf)

Table 8.25: Mean ADS 1992(W) scores by school type (I)

	primary	secondary
<i>acting as a member of a political community</i>	1.18	1.19
<i>choosing</i>	2.41	2.87
<i>doing</i>	1.71	1.90
<i>checking</i>	1.26	1.50
<i>applying</i>	1.47	1.65
<i>participating</i>	1.92	2.07
<i>powerlessness/desire for more influence</i>	2.76	3.00
	(n=17)	(n=26)

Table 8.26 Mean EPS 1992(W) scores by school type (I)

	mean	respondents
primary schools	13.98	23
secondary schools	15.31	16
		<hr/> 39*

* seven respondents were on both primary and secondary school governing bodies: their scores have been included in both categories in tables 8.24 and 8.26

However, 1992 data suggest that parent governors at secondary schools have moved closer, in terms of aspirations, to the consumer-citizen ideal, whilst those at primary schools have moved away (table 8.24). The difference is statistically significant ($p < 5\%$). Secondary school governors are particularly more likely to approve of *choosing* than their primary colleagues ($p < 5\%$) (table 8.25).

The position as regards actual experience is reversed (table 8.26). Secondary school governors were further away than primary school governors from the consumer-citizen ideal, though this difference is not statistically significant.

1988 data indicated that parent governors at church schools and at special schools were much less likely to resemble the consumer-citizen aspiration ideal (table 8.27). A one-way analysis of variance showed significant differences between means ($p < 5\%$; Scheffe S: $p < 1\%$). Looking at the ADS scores (table 8.28), there are indications (not statistically significant) that church and special school parent governors were less inclined to

approve of *applying* or to want more influence, that those at church schools were less approving of *acting as a member of a political community*, and that those at special schools favoured doing less than others (most of these associations did not hold into the 1992 survey however - see below).

Table 8.27: Mean APS 1988 scores by school type (II)

	mean	respondents
church	15.25	12
special	15.26	6
other	13.41	43
		<hr/> 61

Table 8.28: Mean APS 1988 scores by school type (II)

	church	special	other
<i>acting as a member of a political community</i>	1.58	1.17	1.19
<i>choosing</i>	2.67	2.58	2.59
<i>doing</i>	2.16	2.47	2.13
<i>checking</i>	1.79	1.75	1.48
<i>applying</i>	2.37	2.25	1.91
<i>participating</i>	2.18	2.37	1.98
<i>powerlessness/desire for more influence</i>	2.50	2.67	2.14
	(n=12)	(n=6)	(n=43)

1992 data were analysed to see if this was characteristic of respondents four years after the original survey. As the numbers

involved in 1992 were smaller, figures for church and special schools have been combined. Table 8.29 shows, on the basis of combined figures, that church and special schools are still associated with aspirations more removed from the consumer-citizen ideal than other schools, though not to the point of statistical significance. Respondents at church/special schools were less inclined to favour *doing* - the difference in ADS 1992(W) score (2.45 as against 1.81) just failing to reach the point of statistical significance - and to a lesser extent *participating* (2.44 as against 1.96), *checking* (1.86 as against 1.40) and *choosing* (3.07 as against 2.63). The pattern of differences in ADS scores is different, therefore, from that found in 1988, the element of continuity being the propensity of special school respondents (in 1988) and both church and special school respondents (in 1992) to be less approving of *doing*.

Respondents' scores relating to experience show almost no difference as between church and special schools and other schools (table 8.30).

Table 8.29: Mean APS 1992(W) scores by school type (II)

	mean	respondents
church/special	15.68 (15.36)	7
other	13.50 (13.20)	31
		<hr/> 38*

Table 8.30: Mean EPS 1992(W) scores by school type (II)

	mean	respondents
church/special	14.79	5
other	14.62	29
		<hr/> 34*

* in the one case where a respondent was on the governing bodies of both a special school and an 'other' school, her scores were counted in both categories in tables 8.29 and 8.30

Parent Community

One of the new hypotheses to be examined using the 1992 survey data was that proximity to the consumer-citizen ideal would be associated with the extent and type of involvement of a school's parent community. Accordingly, a question was devised that sought respondents' perceptions of that involvement⁴. Most respondents considered that parents at their school had (some or a lot of) interest in:

involving themselves in their own child's schooling (58%)#
telling the school what they think (58%)#
involving themselves in helping the school generally (56%)#

A minority considered parents were interested in:

influencing decisions made by the school and governors (36%)#
checking that the school is doing a good job (33%)#

base = 36

⁴ The idea of using subjects' perceptions of parents as indicators of community characteristics was prompted by work on school principals and their communities (Goldring 1986).

However differences in perceptions of the parent community were not associated with APS or EPS scores.

Position in Governing Body

1988 survey data were analysed to see whether the APS scores of parent governors who were office holders (chair or vice-chair of the governing body) differed from others. No significant difference was found: the mean APS 1988 score of office holders was 13.40 (base = 12), that of others 14.09 (base = 49).

1992 respondents were asked whether they were or had been an office holder. Twelve (32%) indicated that they were or had been. Again, no significant difference in APS scores was found. The mean APS 1992(W) score of office holders was 13.59 (base = 12), whilst that for the remainder was 13.86 (base = 25). With regard to experience, the EPS 1992 scores of the continuing parent governors were broken down and office holders found to be nearer the consumer-citizen ideal: the mean EPS 1992(PG) score of office holders was 13.32 (base = 6), that of non-office holders 14.2 (base = 9). The difference is, however, not statistically significant.

Training and Support

The 1988 questionnaire asked two questions relating to this. It asked whether the respondent had been given any training or information on the role of parent governor, and whether he or she received sufficient support as a governor.

Those who stated that they had received training/information had a mean APS 1988 score closer to the consumer-citizen ideal than those who did not: the respective means were 13.66 (base = 45) and 14.79 (base = 16). Those who stated that they did not have sufficient support also scored lower, compared with respondents who felt they did have enough support: 13.45 (base = 20) as against 14.43 (base = 36). Neither of these differences is statistically significant.

In the 1992 survey, it was decided to include questions on both training and support, but to devise different questions from those used in 1988. The data reported below on these questions are in respect of the continuing parent governors, as they are able to answer them on the same basis, namely their experience up to the time they completed the 1992 questionnaire.

In the case of training, it was inappropriate to repeat the question as the likelihood would be that the proportion answering positively would increase and form the overwhelming majority. This would result in comparison being made with a very small minority and would in all probability not produce useful findings. It was decided therefore to make the question more sensitive by asking how many training events the respondent had attended.

The number of training events the continuing parent governors stated they had attended ranged from one to 12. Three reported that they had attended one event or none, four that they had attended two, and eight that they had attended between three and 12 (one did not respond). The number of events attended was

correlated with each respondent's profile scores. If training is associated with proximity to the consumer-citizen ideal, one would expect a high *negative* correlation between the number of events and profile scores - ie the more training events, the lower the profile score (and, hence, the nearer to the consumer-citizen ideal). By and large, this was not borne out by the findings. Correlation coefficients were negative, but low or modest: -0.469, with APS 1992(PG) scores (base = 15); -0.371, with APS 1988 scores (base = 15); -0.272, with EPS 1992 scores (base = 14).

The question on support was altered as a result of responses to the 1988 survey question. The latter had been phrased deliberately in an open way so as to encourage parent governors to define for themselves through their answer the kinds of support they appreciated or wished to have. However, many respondents expressed the view that support could come from different sources and that the question should clarify which source was being referred to. In consequence, the question in the 1992 survey asked whether the respondent received sufficient support from a) parents, b) central government and the LEA, and c) the headteacher and other school staff.

The highest level of affirmed support was in respect of the headteacher and school staff. Eighty-nine per cent indicated that they had sufficient support from this group (87% amongst the continuing parent governors). Affirmed support from parents and from central government and the LEA was lower: 48% and 41% respectively. However, amongst the continuing parent governors the proportions were higher: 75% and 62% respectively.

Table 8.31: Mean APS 1992(W) scores by perceived support
(equivalent 1988 scores in brackets)

		s u f f i c i e n t from parents		s u p p o r t? from central gov and LEA		from headteacher and school staff	
		mean	resps.	mean	resps.	mean	resps.
yes	14.06 (13.54)	18	13.23 (13.71)	15	13.95 (13.43)	33	
no	13.60 (13.59)	18	14.28 (13.40)	20	12.88 (15.35)	3	

Table 8.32: Mean EPS 1992(W) scores by perceived support

		s u f f i c i e n t from parents		s u p p o r t? from central gov and LEA		from headteacher and school staff	
		mean	resps.	mean	resps.	mean	resps.
yes	14.05	17	14.60	14	14.69	29	
no	15.19	15	14.23	17	12.15	3	

Table 8.33: Mean EDS 1992(W) scores by support from headteacher/school staff

	enough support	not enough
<i>acting as a member of a political community</i>	2.59	2.17
<i>choosing</i>	2.23	1.80
<i>doing</i>	1.98	1.53
<i>checking</i>	1.68	1.23
<i>applying</i>	1.82	2.42
<i>participating</i>	1.68	1.00
<i>powerlessness/ desire for more influence</i>	2.61	2.00
	(n=31, except 'powerlessness..' where n=29)	(n=3)

No significant difference was found in mean APS 1992 scores between 'affirmers' and 'non-affirmers' of support (table 8.31). Similarly, there were no significant differences in respect of EPS 1992 scores (table 8.32), except in relation to headteachers and school staff: the small minority who considered that they had insufficient support from the professional teaching staff were significantly closer to the consumer-citizen ideal in what they did ($p < 5\%$). They were much more likely to be *participating* ($p < 5\%$); the remaining differences in ADS scores are not statistically significant though it is worth noting that the data suggest they may be less likely to experience relative *powerlessness*, whilst (against the trend) they may be less likely to be involved in *applying* (table 8.33).

Problems in Raising Issues

A question on this issue was added for the 1992 survey. It had been raised by parent governors who had assisted in the piloting of the 1992 questionnaire and related to other research suggesting that parent governors had problems in bringing parental interests to bear upon governing body deliberations⁵. 1992 respondents were asked whether they had problems if they wanted to raise issues that they considered the governing body should discuss.

Nine (24%) out of the whole 1992 sample said that they did have problems. Their APS and EPS scores differed little from those the

⁵ Chapter 3, section 'The Participative Model'

majority who indicated that they did not have problems. The mean APS 1992(W) score of the former was 13.31 (base = 9), compared with 13.92 (base = 28) for the latter. Amongst continuing parent governors the mean EPS 1992(PG) score was 13.52 (base = 3) for those who said they did have problems, 13.94 (base = 12) for those who did not.

Voting Behaviour

Is closeness to the consumer-citizen ideal associated with any particular political or ideological perspective? It was decided to ask 1992 respondents how they had voted in the General Election which took place in April 1992. This was taken as a crude indicator of attitudes towards reliance on the private market, on the one hand, and collective forms of provision, on the other. Conservative voting was taken to be associated with positive attitudes to the former. The greater reliance on market forces as means of promoting and protecting the consumer interest, the less relevance one would see in forms of activity other than choosing. One would expect strong proponents of the private market to be less likely to resemble the consumer-citizen ideal.

Table 8.34: Mean APS 1992(W) scores by voting
in April 1992 General Election
(equivalent mean APS 1988 scores in brackets)

	mean	respondents
Conservative voters	15.35 (12.89)	8
Labour voters	13.47 (14.04)	18
Liberal Democrat voters	13.91 (13.46)	8
others*	10.65 (11.83)	3
		<hr/> 37

Table 8.35: Mean EPS 1992(W) scores by voting
in April 1992 general election

	mean	respondents
Conservative voters	13.24	6
Labour voters	15.17	17
Liberal Democrat voters	14.20	7
others*	14.97	2
		<hr/> 32

* non-respondents or voters for other political party

Conservative voters are further away from the consumer-citizen ideal in terms of aspirations (table 8.34), though not to the point of statistical significance. Furthermore, the relative position of the APS scores of Conservative and Labour voters appears to have been reversed between 1988 and 1992.

As the voting referred to is that for 1992, we do not know if the respondents concerned altered their political affiliations over the preceding four years and cannot assess whether changes in consumer-citizen profile scores were associated with changes in political views - for example, whether those least approving of

the consumer-citizen dimensions in 1988 were at that time Conservative supporters.

In relation to experience the pattern is different (table 8.35). Conservative voters are closer than other voters to the consumer-citizen ideal in terms of what they do, or have done, as governors, though again this is not statistically significant.

Perception of Parent Governor role

The majority of the 1988 survey were of the view that parent governors make a contribution which is different from that of other governors: 51 thought this, whilst 9 disagreed. The APS scores of this majority tended to be nearer the consumer-citizen ideal (though the difference was not statistically significant): their mean APS 1988 score was 13.78 (base = 51), that for the others was 14.78 (base = 9).

The question was repeated in the 1992 survey in order to discover whether this difference had widened. The data indicate that it has not (table 8.36). Indeed, the APS means are almost identical. With regard to the experience, there is a marked difference, though it does not achieve statistical significance.

Table 8.36: Mean APS 1992(W) scores by perception of parent governor role
(equivalent 1988 scores in brackets)

	mean	respondents
Parent governor role seen as:		
different	13.97 (13.25)	29
not different	12.95 (14.35)	7
		<hr/> 36

Table 8.37: Mean EPS 1992(W) scores by perception of parent governor role

	mean	respondents
Parent governor role seen as:		
different	14.13	25
not different	15.14	7
		<hr/> 32

9. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS¹

The argument that emerged from the theoretical construction work reported in this study can be expressed simply: parents are consumer-citizens. More precisely, its implication is that parents can be conceived and studied in terms of the ideal typical consumer-citizen and measured against this ideal type. The theoretical construction work was followed by an attempt to specify the ideal type in ways that would facilitate relevant empirical analysis. By utilising the theoretical construct to explore the activities and understandings of a group of 'real-life' parents and setting up testable hypotheses, it was intended that two things would result. We would gain insights into that group and their relationship to school education, and, through this process, we would reach conclusions about the concept of the consumer-citizen: whether it helped in gaining understanding and whether it required significant modification. The imperative to modification would increase, it was envisaged, the more the empirical work indicated that people responded in ways the ideal type led us not to expect.

Parent governors were chosen as the focus for the empirical work. Differences between their relationship to school education and that of the generality of parents have been acknowledged and discussed.

¹Aspects of the discussion in this chapter have been briefly summarised in Woods 1994c.

The consumer-citizen ideal type is a heterogeneous concept, made up of a number of diverse elements (the profile dimensions). For each of these, indicators (reflecting, where appropriate, the representative character of parent governors) were devised so that parent governor perceptions could be measured in terms of the dimensions. These were used to explore the hypothesis that parent governors will tend to resemble the consumer-citizen ideal type. There were two types of indicators: AIs (aspiration indicators), which were concerned with parent governors' aspirations for the participatory structure of school government, and EIs (experience indicators), concerned with parent governors' actual experience of the parent governor role. It was hypothesised that parent governors, as measured by the indicators, will closely resemble the consumer-citizen ideal type.

Three tasks are undertaken in this chapter. Firstly, key points are re-visited in relation to consumerism and the development of a theoretical framework that moves beyond consumerism yet incorporates aspects of it. This is done by critical engagement with two works that have given some thought to consumerism in recent years and which serve to highlight important elements of the consumer-citizen ideal type. Secondly, the empirical findings from the 1988 and 1992 surveys are reviewed and a summary presented. Thirdly, the broad conclusions of the study are outlined, a variation on the consumer-citizen ideal type proposed, and implications for future research identified.

Beyond Consumerism

The coincidence in the UK of the development of consumerism and of increased scope for participation in the running of state schools has been noted². A consumerist emphasis on the critical evaluation of services from the user's perspective, as distinct from that of the producer, may lead to new and vigorous forms of participation which result in a service better tuned to the needs and preferences of those it serves: that, at least, is the promise offered by the confluence of consumerism and a more participatory system of school government. It is a promise, however, which turns much upon how consumerism is conceived.

We shall consider two approaches that are particularly relevant to the concerns of this study. The first relates to research on school governing bodies, the second to young people and citizenship.

In the work of Brehony and Deem, who have undertaken a major, longitudinal research project on school governing bodies, consumerism is seen as being 'grafted on to a discourse of democratic accountability' and as having less to offer than a model of participation inspired by the 'tradition of active, participative citizenship' (Brehony and Deem 1992: 18-19). Their work highlights several critical points that are important in evaluating the reformed system of school government. These include the greatly increased workload imposed on governors by

² Chapter 3, section 'The Participative Model'

local management of schools, the danger of empowering only the 'already privileged', the tendency for co-opted governors and governors nominated by local education authorities (LEAs), rather than parent governors, to take up the 'cudgels of consumer interest', and evidence that participation is less about democratisation of the school system than 'a device to draw on the specific skills and expertise of a minority of governors, mainly from business, at no extra cost to the system while the local apparatus of administration is dismantled piecemeal' (Brehony 1992; Deem 1992). Deem particularly is critical of what she terms the 'consumer interest ideology' which is in the ascendant, tends to 'privilege private, individual interests over... wider public interests..', and which emphasises 'markets, competition, consumer rights and private interests': this is contrasted with a declining 'collective concern ideology' which stresses 'democracy, public accountability and collective concerns' (Deem 1992: 2, 16).

However, most of the difficulties that Brehony and Deem's research point to are the problems that generally characterise translating formal citizenship entitlements into substantive ones (Chapter 2). This they recognise themselves, observing that active citizenship 'in the context of school governing bodies, as in other contexts, is severely constrained by material and cultural inequalities' and concluding that:

attempts to hive off significant areas of administration from the control of professionals and vest them in the hands of unpaid volunteers will almost inevitably lead to

the disillusion of the latter and in most cases a further strengthening of the position of the professionals (Brehony and Deem 1992: 19).

However, it has not been established that Deem's consumer interest ideology has led to a system which serves the public interest *less well* than the unreformed system. Moreover, nor has it been established that it constitutes the fundamental difficulty in the way of achieving greater parental or community participation. There are at least two problems with this latter assertion.

Firstly, private, selfish interests cannot necessarily be allocated to such an ideology. It is true that the notion of people as consumers is often equated, as Deem does, with people being dominated by (their own) private, individualistic interests. In the United States, the 'ideology of consumership', which entails the belief that market mechanisms are superior to 'democratic governance' as a means to improving the schooling system, has been attacked in these terms:

If the consumership coalition succeeds, then we shall have entered a new era of American education, an era in which self-interest and competition will pit student against student and family against family, in the struggle for educational survival (Cookson 1992: 309).

The 'consumership coalition' has, of course, succeeded in large measure already in the UK. Hence, Deem is able to furnish

examples of how governors are responding to this by focusing on what she sees as 'the private interests involved in running that school' which take precedence over 'the wider public concerns of providing the kind of education system which our children require'. One such example is that of governors faced with a budget deficit, who at first talked of fighting the possibility of redundancy by making protests (which would be the way of articulating wider public concerns in her framework) but in the end made a teacher redundant 'despite governors' awareness of the impact this would have on children's learning' (which, according to Deem, is an example of private interests taking precedence) (Deem 1992: 19). It is, however, possible to view either of these actions as selfish and pertaining to private interests. The successful saving of a teacher post is to the advantage of the children at that school and may be to the detriment of another school where the money that would be freed by the redundancy is more greatly needed. If this is the case, then implementing a redundancy might equally be seen as a selfless, public-spirited act to the benefit of those in less fortunate circumstances. The point is that whether actions can be classified as being concerned with private interests or public concerns depends on the context of, and individual motivations of those involved in, the action in question.

This is not to deny that the perspectives and kinds of decisions being made by governors are changing in many of the ways described by Deem. However, we have to be extremely careful in our use of 'private' (which many education researchers see as bad) and 'public' (which many see as good). In the consumer-

citizen conceptual framework the imputing of bad or good through the use of these terms is avoided. The framework in itself is neutral concerning what people wish to achieve. Reassessments of consumerism in recent years alert us to the danger of making a simplistic distinction between good and bad ends, the latter in much critical work on consumerism being identified with popular objects of consumption. This has led, amongst a significant number of left-wing thinkers, to a 'reassessment and revalorization of popular cultural forms and popular experience, of the meanings consumption produces' (Nava 1991: 164).

The second problem with viewing a consumer interest ideology as the fundamental obstacle to achieving greater parental or community participation is that this view is based on a notion of consumer activity which is too narrow and which underrates consumers' capacity for creative and positive action. My argument is not that the broad notion of consumerism that has been articulated in this study will *necessarily* lead to more active parental participation and a schooling system that better serves their needs and preferences. My argument is that, firstly, the narrow form of consumerism, which is evident in Deem's consumer interest ideology, will definitely not achieve it; secondly, that consumerism should not be equated with this narrow form (and, hence, consumerism as such should not be associated with *necessary failure* in achieving more active parental participation and a schooling system that better serves their needs and preferences); and thirdly, that too narrow a view of consumerism means overlooking the positive and valuable

experience that has been gained in advocating and promoting consumer interests over the last thirty years³.

Recent work on young people and citizenship has recognised the significance of the consumer dimension of citizenship. Jones and Wallace ascribe a key position to the notion of 'consumer citizenship', ie 'power through choice in the consumer market' (Jones and Wallace 1992: 144). This also involves for the present Conservative Government introducing a model of consumer choice into 'public services *as though they were services on the private market*' (my emphasis). Jones and Wallace argue that:

In a society comprised of active consumers, citizenship is conferred by the relationship to both public and private consumer markets, and participation in consumer markets is an important aspect of citizenship as a whole (Jones and Wallace 1992: 122).

They are critical of Government policies which ignore the fact that participation in the market depends upon income and which fail to distinguish between basic necessities of life (such as housing) and other goods or services (television channels, for example): the former, they argue, are of such importance that they cannot be approached solely in terms of consumer choice. In the hands of the 'New Right' the notion of 'consumer citizenship' devalues the idea of citizenship rights: citizenship comes to mean the right to 'choose' between services; and choice

³ The need to view a wider conception of consumerism in such positive terms runs through the argument in Chapter 2.

is restricted to those with money. There are positive aspects to participation in consumer markets in that it 'gives some young people the ability to re-make their social identities around their consumer choices, for example in styles of music and dress' (Jones and Wallace 1992: 139). At the same time it has to be recognised, Jones and Wallace emphasise, that this kind of participation is dependent on having a source of income - paid employment, social security and/or (for many young people) other family members.

This notion of 'consumer citizenship' reinforces the limitations of the citizenship concept on its own and echoes many of the points that were made in the discussion of citizenship in Chapter 2.

However, it continues to be constrained by too close an association of consumer activity with making choices in the private market. The ideal type of the consumer-citizen is a considerably broader concept. *Choosing* is only one aspect of consumer-citizen activities and equal status is given to the other characterising elements of the concept. The consumer-citizen concept provides a conceptual framework which reflects the various facets and breadth of consumer activity, and can be used in the study of both private and public spheres - whether or not the service or industry in question is akin to a freely competitive market or an effective monopoly. It is, as a result, a more powerful analytical tool than conceptions of the consumer which are limited to choice and private competitive markets.

The broad view of consumerism, founded in the experience of the consumer movement, which the consumer-citizen ideal type

incorporates is the basis for the promise offered by the confluence of consumerism and enhanced opportunities for participation in the running of schools. Providing opportunities for democratic involvement, ie formal democratic rights as part of the entitlements of citizenship, is not in itself enough. This much is agreed by those who draw attention to the failures in achieving substantive citizenship. The existence of democratically elected political representatives does not assure public services which are of high quality, accessible to those who need them and efficient - hence, the relevance of the consumer principles referred to above⁴. In the consumer-citizen perspective, consumerist thinking (such as that enshrined in the form of these principles) supplements traditional representative democracy. It emphasises the experience of the 'ordinary' person at the receiving end of a service and the range of measures which can be deployed to assist or protect him or her. These measures are the policy outcomes of the empowerment models that have been outlined (the impact of which is mediated by *resources* and *context*⁵). This consumer-citizen framework pulls together the elements required in bringing consumerist thinking to bear upon the relationship between people (as citizens) and the enormously important public services that characterise modern states. It highlights the positive and creative aspect of consumer activity (as involved with *checking* and *doing* for example) and integrates into notions of citizenship consumerist concerns (and a wealth of practical experience in tackling these). These concerns include issues such as information needs, the importance of plain,

⁴ Chapter 2, section 'Citizenship'

⁵ see below 'Review of Empirical Findings'

understandable language, complaints and redress procedures, representation of users' interests at all levels of decision-making, and so on (emanating from the 'structured underpinning' provided by consumer principles).

Neither consumer individualism nor democratic individualism are sufficient in themselves⁶. In a society where consumption, including collective consumption, is pervasive and highly significant, the two need to be synthesised. The concept of the consumer-citizen represents that synthesis. To argue this is not to claim that the broad notion of consumerism which is part of the consumer-citizen concept will inevitably become an active part of the education system. The purpose of using the consumer-citizen ideal type as a yardstick is to measure the extent to which people resemble, or do not resemble, that ideal. Findings, such as those of Brehony and Deem (1990), that parent governors do not necessarily promote consumer interests, reinforce the point that there are instances when experience falls short of that which is promised.

Review of Empirical Findings

The review of the findings from the 1988 and 1992 surveys proceeds as follows. The main limitations to the method used and data obtained are briefly re-iterated. The profile dimensions are then discussed in turn, followed by a discussion which addresses the extent to which parent governors in the area studied appear

⁶ Chapter 2, section 'Towards an Alternative Concept'

to resemble the ideal consumer-citizen. Finally, factors associated with varying proximity to the ideal consumer-citizen are discussed.

Limitations

In reviewing the consumer-citizen concept, we need to be mindful of the limitations to the method used and data obtained (outlined in Chapter 6). The main limitations are summarised below.

Firstly, the particular group of subjects chosen for the empirical work (ie parent governors) could be challenged on the grounds that they are something less than true consumer-citizens. It was acknowledged that the empirical work would have benefited from including parents (equally hypothesised to be consumer-citizens) who were not acting in a representative capacity on governing bodies and were thus investigated in their position as 'ordinary' users of the school system. It was also noted that:

- although the parental dimension of the parent governor role is an essential part of the expectations which attach to them, the extent to which they carry out this in practice is an empirical question; and that
- parent governors run the danger of being compromised as consumer-citizen representatives and 'going native' - ie becoming dominated by the concerns and perspectives of professional and managerial interests.

These points, it was stated, would need to be borne in mind in interpreting and discussing the significance of the empirical work.

Secondly, there are important ways in which the empirical indicators - ie the questions put to parent governors - are less than ideal, and the validity of such indicators is in need of more extensive development. Variations in response to the indicators of particular consumer-citizen dimensions were found in the surveys. These variations will, to some degree, reflect differences in respondents' attitudes to the foci of the questions (the national curriculum or headteacher selection, for example) as matters for parent governor involvement. To a greater or lesser extent, measurement of respondents' attitudes to the consumer-citizen dimensions is mediated by these specific foci. It was particularly apparent that the foci of the AI questions for *doing* and for *participating* made a substantial difference to the approval rating. For example, within *doing*, less than half considered making curricular changes appropriate whilst almost all approved of selecting the headteacher. Within *participating*, only a third approved of advising the headteacher on the curriculum compared with around 90% agreeing that the annual parents' report and annual parents' meeting were appropriate. With other dimensions there were fewer AI questions and foci and the scope for a wide range in responses more restricted. For example, *acting as a member of a political community* focused specifically on the LEA. Moreover, the introduction of other foci (such as a question relating to central government in the latter case) could result in additional variations in response. EI questions were designed to be more general in nature. Even so they had to be concerned with specific actions and

foci as a means of operationalising the abstract notions behind the dimensions. The difference between the EI question attracting the highest percentage affirming it as a good description of what the parent governor did and the lowest percentage was greatest for *acting as a member of a political community, choosing and powerlessness/desire for more influence*.

Thirdly, responses to questions were aggregated for the purpose of forming indicators of the consumer-citizen dimensions and for statistical analysis. This means that the statistical tests used are not sensitive to variations in responses to individual questions.

Fourthly, the effective sample size was restricted as a result of a substantial non-response rate (in 1988) and sample attrition (in 1992). This affects the internal validity of the study as the aim was to survey the population of parent governors in a specified area.

The consequence of these limitations is that the drawing of specific conclusions from the data has to be undertaken with particular caution and such conclusions need to be broad in nature. This is reflected below in the summary presentation ('Parent Governors as Consumer-Citizens'), to which the discussion of the profile dimension builds.

The Profile Dimensions

Overwhelming majorities considered that *checking* was both an appropriate activity for them to be involved in through their governing body and a good description of what they actually did do. The AI questions referred to evaluating the school and

assessing school assessment/exam results. The emphasis with *checking* is on parent governors using criteria and values that are important to them (and/or the parents they represent) by which to assess schooling (rather than ensuring the school meets externally-devised requirements, which is the province of *applying*). Hence, the EI questions specifically referred to 'checking that the school is meeting the standards and providing the education *you* believe it should and *parents at the school* believe it should' (emphases as in the stage 2 questionnaire) and 'trying to inform parents so they can check the school is meeting standards and providing the education they want'. All but one of the continuing parent governors indicated that these were good descriptions of what they actually do.

The key words with this dimension are checking, assessing and evaluating. Parent governors in the surveys appeared to identify with these and to be readily carrying them out.

The definition of *acting as a member of a political community* was sub-divided into *lobbying* (ie trying to influence political authorities - LEA, central government and politically-appointed bodies), *using the law* (ie drawing on statutory rights and requirements to one's own advantage - for example, using standards on health and safety, as laid down by law, in order to make sure the school provides a safe environment), and *obeying* (ie following guidelines and instructions from political authorities, such as the statutory and non-statutory guidance on the national curriculum).

Acting as a member of a political community, on the basis of an AI question tightly focused on the LEA, attracted strong and consistent approval across the two surveys. Thus it can be seen that parent governors strongly approved of *lobbying* in terms of representing the school's interests to the LEA. Questions remain regarding the extent to which parent governors might see themselves as undertaking *lobbying* in relation to political authorities other than the LEA. The relevance of these is likely to increase as more schools opt out of LEA control and central authorities (the Department for Education, Welsh Office and Funding Agency for Schools) take increased responsibilities vis-à-vis individual schools (Department for Education/Welsh Office 1992).

In contrast to its strong approval rating, *acting as a member of a political community* was one of two dimensions that were furthest away from the consumer-citizen ideal in terms of what parent governors were actually doing. Thus parent governors were in favour of *lobbying* but most of them appeared not to be involved in doing it. A possible reason for this would be if most parent governors felt that - up to now at least - they had no reason to *lobby*.

With regard to *using the law*, it was expected that the 1992 survey would not show a high proportion of parent governors affirming this as part of their activity. It was considered that over time, as governors generally become accustomed to exercising the powers and duties they have been given, they could increasingly see aspects of the law as a resource with which they

can push for improvements in schooling. In the event, the responses to the EI questions suggested that parent governors already see themselves as making use of the law. The overwhelming majority did believe that using the law to their advantage in order to bring about changes was a good description of what they did as a member of a governing body. This contrasts with the other EI questions for *acting as a member of a political community*. Just over a half agreed that they followed guidelines and instructions from political authorities, whilst just over a third agreed that they tried to influence political authorities (eg LEAs, central government) on educational matters or that they tried to involve parents in influencing political authorities.

With regard to *obeying*, it might be considered safe to assume that parent governors will generally see themselves as under an obligation to obey statutory requirements. However, the extent to which parent governors consider themselves obliged to follow the statutory requirements and guidance from political authorities (or, conversely are justified in ignoring certain of these because, as they see it, their implementation would be detrimental to the school) is an empirical question. The less the felt obligation, the more their perspective would be outside of that involved in *acting as a member of a political community*. This is because they would be putting their private assessments and values above that of the collective view, as represented by political authorities. It should be emphasised strongly that this does not assume that to be a citizen is to be compliant and deferential to the powers-that-be. A citizen in conflict with political authorities is acting as a member of the political community. However, such conflict

between parent governors and political authorities would fall within *lobbying* (be it by making representations, demonstrating, publicly defying the law, or other means of seeking to alter the decisions of political authorities). Making one's own (private) assessment of what to obey and what not to obey implies a setting of oneself outside the political community. The point about *obeying* is neatly illustrated by a comment written in against the question about following guidelines and instructions from political authorities: 'only when it suits us'.

As was noted when defining the consumer-citizen ideal type (Chapter 4), *acting as a member of a political community* and *applying* can be closely linked. In relation to state-run services particularly, they can each be concerned with using the law and guidance from political authorities. *Applying*, however, focuses on using these to ensure a good or service is achieving quality standards specified by statute or political guidance. The AI questions for *applying* were about ensuring that the national curriculum is followed and that a balanced view of political issues is presented in the school. Approval for these was high, and approval increased significantly between 1988 and 1992 amongst respondents generally. *Applying* also attracted a high rating as a description of what parent governors are doing: large majorities of the continuing parent governors saw themselves as making sure that the school meets externally-devised standards laid down by central government, the LEA and other bodies.

Amongst these continuing parent governors, it is notable too that it was approval of *doing* that moved significantly towards the

consumer-citizen ideal between 1988 and 1992 (rather than *applying*). This was the period when governors began to take on more and more duties and decision-making powers, ie when the law required them to be more involved in *doing*. However, the fact that governors' statutory responsibilities were growing does not automatically mean that parent governors would approve of this. The significance of the marked move in the approval of *doing* is that it suggests that parent governors are beginning to accept them as proper elements of the governor's role. In addition, attitudes towards *doing* may well have become, between 1988 and 1992, the best indicator amongst the dimensions of parent governors' proximity to the consumer-citizen ideal type. The correlation between profile aspiration score and the aspiration dimension score for doing was notably strong in the case of 1992 continuing parent governors. Overall, 1988 and 1992 data also suggested that approval of *doing* was positively correlated with approval of *checking* and of *participating*.

Not all decision-making activities within *doing* showed increases in their approval rating. Against the trend, it is noteworthy that approval for governors making changes to the school curriculum fell sharply. Reluctance on the part of parent governors to become involved in curriculum matters has been found by others (Baginsky, Baker and Cleave 1991; Deem and Brehony 1993), reflecting a 'recognition that, while lay perspectives on the curriculum are desirable, final decisions ought to rest with professional teachers' (Golby and Brigley 1989: 49). Whilst decisions relating to most aspects of schooling are seen as open

to parental involvement, the approach to curriculum matters - the central activity of the school - is much more tentative.

Participating is concerned with all those ways by which the consumer-citizen seeks to influence producers, whether by means of dialogue or directly taking part in decision-making. The focus of this dimension for parent governors was taken to be expressing views to the headteacher, LEA and other governors, and, because of their representative capacity, communicating with parents. The AI questions for *participating* referred mainly to advising the headteacher (one referred to advising the LEA), together with two questions on communicating with parents. The latter were concerned with holding an annual parents' meeting and preparing an annual report for parents (both statutory duties).

Between 1988 and 1992 approval for *participating* was overtaken by that for *doing*. However, approval ratings for the *participating* AI questions ranged very widely - more widely than with any of the other dimensions. Around nine out of ten respondents approved of the activities concerned with communicating with parents. Respondents were less approving of advising the headteacher about various matters, with only a third of the 1992 sample thinking it appropriate for the governing body to advise the headteacher on the curriculum. The implication is that parent governors very strongly approve of the aspect of *participating* that is concerned with communicating with parents, but are less approving of advising the headteacher. Does this mean that they are reticent about influencing the professionals on these matters?

In fact, approval for making decisions with regard to staffing and budget matters increased markedly, suggesting that the emphasis in parent governors' minds is on *doing* rather than advising or *participating*.

The only issue in relation to which there was a fall in approval is the curriculum, with both the relevant *doing* and *participating* AIs registering a decline. Indeed, only the curriculum attracts minority approval under *doing* and *participating*, underlining the tentativeness towards the curriculum which has already been noted. The two respective AIs on the curriculum can be seen as 'out on a limb', thereby contributing to the wide range in approval rating percentages for these two dimensions.

In terms of actual experience, *participating* was much closer to the consumer-citizen ideal. The EI questions for *participating* asked about 'expressing your views to the governing body' and 'giving opportunities to parents to express their views about the school'. They do not refer to specific activities (such as annual parents' meeting and advising the headteacher on various matters) but were drawn from the more clearly defined elements of the consumer-citizen concept that had been developed since the 1988 survey. Thus they do not reveal whether the very wide range evident in the approval ratings is also apparent in experience: for example, whether participation in annual parents' meetings and preparation of reports to parents is much more prevalent than advising the headteacher on the curriculum, budget matters, discipline, and so on. What the findings suggest is that most parent governors participate in the sense of expressing

their views to the governing body. This is reinforced by the finding that a minority of respondents said that they had problems in raising issues that they considered the governing body should discuss. In addition, they suggest that the vast majority of parent governors are giving parents opportunities to express their views about the school. With regard to the latter, it would be interesting to discover parents' views on this point. To what extent do the parents who are being represented consider that they are offered opportunities to make their views known?

Choosing attracted low levels of approval. The AI questions relating to this dimension were concerned with how respondents rated:

- choice as a criterion by which to judge the education system, relative to other criteria (standards, efficiency and equality)
- the statement 'parents and pupils are consumers of the education service and should have rights of choice and redress as customers', as against statements that 'parents are partners with the professionals in the shared task of educating their child' and 'involving parents in the school is important because it means that children will learn better'.

The ideal typical consumer-citizen is orientated to making choices between competing products and between alternative options within services (such as which subject option, which state school to choose), and generally to utilising their rights as a consumer in relation to producers. Parent governors in the

surveys were somewhat removed from this ideal in terms of their aspirations.

With regard to what they actually did, the picture is different. Parent governors were nearer to the ideal according to their experience than their aspirations. The vast majority saw themselves as trying to provide parents with choices within the school and trying to ensure parents are informed so they can make choices (either within or between schools). The emphasis on the former (choice within schools) is intriguing, given the lack of emphasis on this aspect of parental choice (as opposed to choice of school) in educational debates in the UK.

Powerlessness/desire for more influence is the dimension furthest away from the consumer-citizen ideal, both in terms of aspirations and experience. That is, parent governors' desire for more influence is not as great as one would expect if they conformed to the theoretical construction of the ideal type; nor is their sense of relative powerlessness, based on their own assessment of parent governor experience. Moreover, the desire for more influence fell markedly (ie away from the ideal) between 1988 and 1992. This contrasts with the other dimensions, most notably *doing* and *applying* in relation to which respondents moved markedly towards the consumer-citizen ideal. In particular, as those who continued as parent governors became more enthusiastic about *doing*, their desire for more influence fell. This was especially marked in relation to parent governors specifically (as opposed to the governing body of which they are part, in relation to which there was only a slight

fall in the proportion wanting it to have more influence). Fewer parent governors wanted more influence for themselves and more viewed parent governors as one of the groups with most influence in their governing body. As far as influence in practice is concerned, most parent governors considered that they exercised less influence than the school's headteacher and teaching staff, but only minorities felt that they were less influential than other governors or national and local politicians.

Parent Governors as Consumer-Citizens

To what extent can it be said that parent governors in the area studied appear to resemble the ideal consumer-citizen?

No parent governor was found to match perfectly the consumer-citizen ideal type. It was also found that the profile dimensions did not vary together from parent governor to parent governor. That is, for any one person, the dimension scores did not tend to be the same as each other and the dimensions did not all depart from the ideal to the same extent. The empirical data led to parent governors being placed at various points on a continuum, so that some could be seen as being closer to the ideal typical consumer-citizen than others. The clear tendency was for parent governors to be nearer the ideal end of that continuum, rather than to be spread along its whole length. Thus it can be concluded that parent governors tended towards resemblance of the consumer-citizen ideal, but did not match that ideal exactly.

The limitations of the data mean that a broad approach needs to be taken in summarising what the empirical work suggests about parent governors. In particular, the extent to which dimensions can be compared and put into an order, from most approved to least approved and from most characteristic of parent governor experience to least, is restricted. In presenting a picture of parent governors as measured by the consumer-citizen yardstick, attention must be drawn to the foci of the indicator questions used for each dimension.

In figure 9.1, therefore, the dimensions are broadly classified as receiving high or low ratings and the main foci pertaining to these ratings are noted. A high rating indicates that the dimension's mean scores (table 7.3) tend towards the consumer-citizen ideal (ie are between 1 and 2.5). A low rating indicates scores around 2.5 or more, tending away from the consumer-citizen ideal. The main foci are those which attracted approval or affirmation as a good description from large majorities of respondents (defined as two-thirds or more). In three instances - *choosing* (under 'approval rating') and *powerlessness/desire for more influence* (both ratings) - no foci were approved or affirmed by large majorities (indeed most foci in these instances drew positive responses from a minority). The data underlying figure 9.1 have been reported in detail in Chapter 7.

A 'broad brush' picture of parent governors could be painted in the following terms. *Checking* is, arguably, the most significant activity because of its very high approval rating and very high

FIGURE 9.1: SUMMARY PRESENTATION

	<i>approval rating</i>	<i>main foci (*)</i>	<i>experience rating</i>	<i>main foci (*)</i>
<i>checking</i>	high	<i>evaluation exam results (none**)</i>	high	<i>using parent gov's own criteria, parent's criteria informing parents so they can check (none**)</i>
<i>acting as a member of a political community</i>	high	<i>LEA (none)</i>	low	<i>using the law (three)</i>
<i>applying</i>	high	<i>national curriculum political balance (none)</i>	high	<i>using standards from LEA from central gov. from other bodies informing parents so they can use standards (none)</i>
<i>doing</i>	high	<i>sex educ. policy selecting head discipline policy selecting staff keeping curriculum up to date staff discipline/ dismissal managing school budget deciding numbers/ type of staff needed directing conduct if school (two)</i>	high	<i>conduct and education of the school involving parents in decisions providing services (none)</i>
<i>participating</i>	high	<i>preparing annual parents' report holding annual parents' meeting advising on conduct of school advising LEA on selection of head (four)</i>	high	<i>expressing views giving parents opportunities to express views (none)</i>
<i>choosing</i>	low	<i>(two)</i>	high	<i>informing parents so they can make choice providing choices within school (one)</i>
<i>powerlessness/ desire for more influence</i>	low	<i>(three)</i>	low	<i>(four)</i>

* Main foci are those which attracted approval (in the case of AI questions) or affirmation as good description (in the case of EI questions) of *two-thirds or more* of respondents. Main foci associated with approval rating are based on 1992(W) sample; main foci associated with experience rating are based on 1992 (PG) sample.

** Figures in brackets indicate number of foci (i.e. indicator questions) attracting less than two-thirds approval/affirmation rating.

rating as a description of what parent governors do. *Acting as a member of a political community*, in terms of lobbying the LEA, is notable also for its very high approval rating, but appears a less significant part of parent governors' practical experience.

Applying, doing, and participating attract high approval ratings and high ratings as descriptions of what parent governors are actually doing. *Choosing* is approved much less, though there are signs that it is becoming a greater part of parent governor activity. *Powerlessness/desire for more influence* attracts a low rating both in terms of approval and experience.

It was acknowledged, when defining the consumer-citizen ideal type, that such an ideal may imperfectly reflect perceived reality if the phenomenon that the ideal type seeks to represent is in the early stages of development, or (conversely) in the later stages of decline⁷. What the study has identified is not an overall growth or decline in resemblance to the ideal, but trends towards the ideal in some dimensions and away in the *powerlessness/desire for more influence* dimension. The strength of the latter trend might be taken as suggesting the need for its recognition in the conceptual framework. One way of doing this is to introduce the notion of specific variations from the ideal, where significant trends such as this are suggested by empirical enquiry. On the basis of findings from this study, the concept of the *incorporated consumer-citizen* as a specific variation is proposed and outlined below⁸.

⁷ Chapter 4

⁸ see final section, 'Reflections on the Consumer-Citizen Ideal Type and Implications for Future Work'

Factors Associated with Varying Proximity to the Consumer-Citizen Ideal

As with citizenship, attitudes and experience as a consumer-citizen are likely to vary and to be affected by or associated with a range of factors which interact with the social changes - in social class, gender, urban life, and scope for consumption - discussed in Chapter 2. There are, accordingly, a vast range of factors which could be associated with variations in proximity to the consumer-citizen ideal. In seeking to understand these variations I have sought to postulate the kinds of factors likely to impinge in a direct way upon people's role as consumer-citizens. Two categories have been put forward (Woods 1992b): the *resources* that individual consumer-citizens draw upon to take advantage of the empowerment models and the *context* in which they act (Woods 1993a⁹). *Resources* include:

- money
- information
- legal rights
- cultural capital (skills, contacts, ability to 'work system', etc)

Access to these is likely to be influenced by characteristics such as social class and gender.

⁹ The conceptual framework provided by these factors has been used in analysing aspects of the PASCI (Parental and School Choice Interaction) study referred to in Chapter 3 (section, 'The Competitive Market Model') - see Woods 1994b

By *context* is meant:

- availability (ie whether the kinds of goods or services people want are produced)
- conditions of the consumption process (accessibility of good/service; attitudes of producers; opportunities for contact with producers; 'atmosphere' of producer-user interaction, and so on)

Personal characteristics, such as values, attitudes and perceptions may also impinge upon proximity to the consumer-citizen ideal and empowerment.

Data from the 1988 and 1992 surveys enabled a limited amount of analysis to be undertaken on factors associated with variations in proximity to the consumer-citizen ideal. Parent governors' perceptions and resemblance to the consumer-citizen ideal type were analysed according to a number of variables (see Chapter 8). Some of these can be seen as probable or possible influences on *resources*: social class, gender, integration with the community, location (community type), length of time as governor, and connection with education system. Others pertain to *context*: namely, type of school, characteristics of the parent community, position in governing body, and difficulties experienced in raising issues for discussion. Yet others (receipt of governor training and availability of support to governors) might be seen as pertaining to both or either: as influencing access to information and knowledge of legal rights, for example, whilst being an aspect of the consumption process (concerning, for

example, the willingness of producers to train consumer-citizen representatives). The remaining variables were concerned with attitudes: general political views, as reflected in voting at the April 1992 General Election, and views towards the parent governor role (whether it was seen as distinctive from that of other governors).

Below, the associations found in the 1988 and 1992 data, together with the most interesting of the non-associations, are summarised and discussed.

Profile scores were not found to be associated with social class in any uniform way. In particular, it was not found that positive attitudes to the dimensions increased from the 'lower' to the 'higher' social classes. Simply because a parent governor is from a middle class household does not mean that he or she is more likely to want be more active (*checking, doing, applying*, etc). The significance of this is that the consumer-citizen concept is conceived as developing in the context of a class structure and political context undergoing fundamental changes. As the traditional working class declines, sociological concern with consumption issues and the nature of citizenship increases and the nature of socialism (or possible alternatives to socialism) is a matter of keen debate. A simple association with social class would not necessarily be expected. This is not to say that class analysis is no longer relevant to sociological studies. It is to acknowledge that the nature and development of class as a component of sociological research is the subject of important

re-appraisals, and that other factors in the context of change discussed in Chapter 2 are likely to have increasing impact.

The findings provide us with indicators of possible trends in relation to social class. Firstly, in the 1988 survey the strongest aspirations to the consumer-citizen ideal were associated with professional and managerial parent governors and working class parent governors. Those in between were less approving. Secondly, data from both the 1988 and 1992 surveys suggested that working class parent governors could be more inclined than others to approve of *choosing* whilst being less inclined to want more influence. Indeed, parent governors from working class households might be seen in terms of their aspirations as exemplars of the *incorporated consumer-citizen*, the variation from the ideal which is put forward in the next section: tending towards the ideal on the active dimensions and away with regard to wanting more influence. Thirdly, in the 1992 survey, there were suggestions that working class parent governors might be closer to the ideal in what they do as governors.

The possibility that parent governors in 'newer areas' are more active as consumer-citizens is also of interest in this context. The analysis was undertaken in part because it might be expected that the ideal type consumer-citizen would be generated in newer and, arguably, more socially fluid communities. Older communities, such as those in the South Wales Valleys, might be less open (it could be argued) to the newer forms of 'broad consumer' activism incorporated in the consumer-citizen concept. In the event, both types of community are as likely as each other to

produce parent governors positively orientated to the consumer-citizen. There were indications, however, in the 1992 survey that 'newer area' parent governors are more active (though the association just failed to reach significance).

Differences according to gender were found, though they did not necessarily persist into the follow-up survey and there were indications that gender and social class were interacting factors. According to the 1988 data, female parent governors were less likely to be near the consumer-citizen ideal in their aspirations. In particular, they were less likely to approve of *participating* or *doing*, or to want more influence. Although the gender difference did not persist in to the 1992 survey, it is noteworthy that the 1992 data suggested that female parent governors may still be less likely to want more influence. This may be related to the under-representation of women in influential and decision-making positions generally, leading (it might be argued) to lower expectations as compared with men.

That women, however, should not be treated as a homogeneous grouping is underlined by the findings relating to working class female parent governors. These were particularly interesting. They suggest that female parent governors from working class homes may be closer to the consumer-citizen ideal than those from middle class homes. The 1988 survey suggested that female working class parent governors were more likely to aspire to the ideal than their middle class counterparts: they were much more likely to approve of *choosing* and *doing*, ie to attach importance to choice and parents as consumers and to view decision-making

as appropriate for governors. The overall difference in aspiration profile scores did not persist into the 1992 survey. However, there were indications that female respondents from working class households remained more inclined to approve of *choosing* and thus to favour seeing parents as consumers and as choice-makers. The 1992 data also suggested that female working class respondents may be closer to the ideal in what they do as governors. The implications of these findings are not clearcut. They do not indicate an unambiguous association between proximity to the consumer-citizen ideal and working class females. However, they do suggest that attitudes concerning choice and consumerism are particularly relevant to understanding the relationship of women from working class households to school education.

Parent governors at secondary schools were found to be more consumer-citizen-like in their aspirations than their primary level counterparts, according to the 1992 data. This was not expected. It was considered that the more frequent contact between primary school parents and school would have led to a more approving attitude towards activism. Secondary school parent governors are, however, more active across most of the profile dimensions and more likely to want greater influence. They are especially more approving of *choosing*, which may be associated with the enhanced emphasis on parental choice of school since the 1988 Education Reform Act and the fact that parents tend to be involved in choosing between schools more at secondary level than primary.

The 1992 data suggest that primary school governors may be *in practice* more active than those at secondary school. Thus whilst secondary school governors are likely to be frustrated, wanting more active participation than they are able to achieve in practice, primary school governors are perhaps being drawn into more active involvement than they wish.

The 1988 data and (less conclusively) 1992 data indicated that parent governors at church schools and special schools were less likely to approve of the consumer-citizen dimensions. As with the findings on primary schools, this was not expected at the outset of the work. It was considered that parents would tend to have closer links with these schools and, therefore, be more positive about participation in their running. Parental involvement in the area of special needs has, in particular, been described as a 'beacon within education', with initiatives acting as pace-setters demonstrating the effectiveness of parent-teacher co-operation to the broader mainstream (Wolfendale 1989: 106). The point highlights an important distinction between parental involvement orientated around the education of an individual child (home reading schemes, progress reporting, and the like, which involves the child's family) and collective parental participation in the running of schools (through elected parent representatives, annual parents' meetings, etc). Parents may be more enthusiastic about the former than the latter. Where the demands on the family are especially great, as with special needs, the energy or the wish to participate in school governance may be less. Perhaps, too, there may be both more involvement with and reliance upon the professional at the same time, so that at levels of decision-

making beyond the individual child there is more of an attitude of 'leave it to the professionals'. The latter point is consistent with indications that parent governors at special schools (and, possibly, church schools) are less inclined to approve of *doing* - and, as has been noted, attitudes to *doing* are an important indicator of approval of activism generally as measured by the consumer-citizen ideal.

It could be that involvement of a special religious authority (the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church in the case of the schools represented in this study) leads to a lesser belief that parents should be actively involved in the schools' running. The church school is specialist, as are those catering for special needs, and deference to the professionals - at least at the level of school government - could be more prevalent. This deference may break down, however, where strong differences surface between governors and parents on the one hand, and church authorities on the other (Arthur 1994). Generally, where the nature and strength of the values espoused at a school - or imposed upon a schools by external authorities - differ from values strongly held by parents, one would expect parent activism (as described by the consumer-citizen profile) to be greater.

Parent governors who had served (by 1992) six years or less were more likely to be consumer-citizen-like in their activity as governors. These are the 'medium-term servers', as opposed to the 'long-term servers' who have been governors for more than six years. It might have been expected that the greater experience of the 'long-term servers' would have prepared them to be more

active under the new system of school government implemented from 1988 onwards. However, it is the nature, rather than the length, of experience that may be the crucial factor. The 'medium-term servers' have spent most of their time as governors under this new system, with increased powers for governing bodies and the enhanced position of parent governors. Because of their limited experience of the old system, the argument would go, they are the ones who were predisposed to take up the opportunities and challenges of greater activism since 1988. Thus 'medium-term' servers are much more likely to be making their views known and encouraging parents to express their opinions (*participating*), more involved in *checking*, *choosing* and *doing*, and are more likely to experience relative *powerlessness*. They, it could be argued, point to the future pattern of consumer-citizen activism.

There is also an indication in the 1992 data that parent governors who are thrown onto their own resources - or feel that they are - are more likely to be the most active. A perceived lack of support from the headteacher and staff was associated with greater consumer-citizen-like activity. This greater level of activity was across all the profile dimensions, except for *applying* (in relation to which they were less active than others). Those who felt they lacked support were a small minority. However, they appear to represent a group of particularly active governors, not especially keen to ensure that requirements laid down by external authorities are met, but forward in making their views known and getting involved in *doing*, *checking* and so on - and finding that

they feel relatively *powerless* in comparison with others involved in the school system.

One of the characteristics of the associations with proximity to the consumer-citizen ideal was the propensity for these to change between 1988 and 1992. For example, the associations with social class, gender and church and special schools did not persist into the 1992 follow-up survey. In addition, new associations were found in data from the latter (for example, with secondary and primary schools). The former - the failure of some associations to persist - may, to some extent, be connected with the smaller numbers involved in the 1992 data. Sample attrition was relatively low, but there were fewer respondents and this meant it was more difficult to reach the point of statistical significance. It may also be that the associations are changing. That which we are measuring by means of the consumer-citizen yardstick is itself in the process of change, as we have reported, as well as the system of school government within which parent governors are operating. It is likely that there will be further changes, both in proximity to the consumer-citizen ideal and in schools, during the coming years. As a result, there may be changes in the factors associated with proximity to the consumer-citizen ideal.

In the meantime, it appears from the data reported in the two surveys that *context* - in the form of type of school, formative experience (ie whether under the new or old school government systems), and support from the school's headteacher and staff - are important factors influencing proximity to the consumer-citizen ideal.

The effects of social class, gender and location or community type are less clear. The historical perspective given to parent representation on governing bodies drew to our attention the long history of uneven representation (in terms of class and gender in particular)¹⁰. This suggests that the burden of expectation should lie with the continuation of such unevenness, rather than any (historically) sudden shifts to equal representation, a view reinforced by the case for the persistence of social class effects (even if the nature and context of social class is undergoing profound changes) and gender differences noted in Chapter 2. Variations in consumer-citizen attitudes and experience need to be explored in more detailed and more sophisticated ways than possible in this study, focusing in particular on the effects of interactions between social cleavages like class and gender.

Reflections on the Consumer-Citizen Ideal Type and Implications for Future Work

This section returns to the possible broad outcomes of the study, suggests a variation on the the ideal type consumer-citizen, and outlines implications for future work on the basis of some critical reflections on the empirical work and issues raised by the surveys.

¹⁰ Chapter 3, section 'The Participative Model'

Broad Outcomes

In Chapter 4, three possible broad outcomes of the study were outlined. These were that:

- the concept, largely as it stands, is found to be a satisfactory and helpful way of conceptualising parents in relation to schooling and of measuring their perceptions and activities;
- the concept is found to require major modifications which, once made, will make it worthy of further use, testing and refinement;
- the concept is found not to fit in any significant way parents' experience and should be abandoned.

The fundamental conclusion of the theoretical element of this study is that the consumer-citizen concept is a more accurate and useful analytical tool than either the 'consumer' or the 'citizen' in understanding the relationship of parents to the schooling system. The empirical work with parent governors pointed to the significance of *checking* (in which parent governors evaluate according to criteria important to them or the parents they represent), the growing importance of *doing* and *applying* (both of which relate to the increased powers and duties given to governors under the Government's educational reforms) and increased satisfaction with the amount of influence they experienced since 1988. This experience of utilising the consumer-citizen ideal type in empirical work suggests that it is capable of doing the work for which it is intended, ie it provides an idealised description of

people's relationship to public services, an ideal which is to a measurable extent present in the attitudes and behaviours of a section of those people. Hence, it is a usable yardstick and the third of the above options - abandonment of the concept - can be discarded because the ideal type is doing the work for which it is intended.

It would be presumptuous, however, to conclude that the ideal type, as set out in Chapter 4, is beyond improvement or amendment. The option that best fits may lie somewhere between the first and second above: the consumer-citizen concept usefully acts as a yardstick, but some response is needed to the apparent trend between 1988 and 1992 away from the dimension *powerlessness/desire for more influence*.

The Incorporated Consumer-Citizen

It might be argued that this trend undermines the reasoning behind the consumer-citizen concept. After all, it was hypothesised that mean aspiration profile scores would move between those years towards the ideal and this was not found to be so. A significant factor in this not being the case was the marked shift in the *powerlessness/desire for more influence* dimension in the opposite direction. Does this not throw into question the way in which this dimension has been theoretically constructed? Ought it to be taken as suggesting that *powerlessness/desire for more influence* is out of line with the other dimensions - more likely to move in one direction whilst

the others move in another? If so, should not a reconstruction of the ideal type be undertaken?

The *powerlessness/desire for more influence* dimension was formulated on the basis of the discussion in Chapter 2 which recognised the problematic nature of the consumer concept, argued that it nevertheless had much that was relevant to conceptualising service users, and observed that consumerism is concerned with the redistribution of power to consumers. Hence, it was maintained, the ideal typical consumer-citizen is in a relatively disadvantaged position in terms of power: the ideal type is characterised as possessing less influence than producers and other decision-makers (administrators and politicians). This argument, drawing as it does from an appreciation of consumerism in relation to all kinds of industries and services (and to experience in many countries), still stands. The concept of the consumer-citizen, which is heterogeneous in nature and intended to be used as a yardstick, is fulfilling its capacity as a measure even when different dimension scores move in opposite directions. This phenomenon tells us something about a particular situation. Equally, the ideal type can be used as a yardstick to see whether the same phenomenon occurs in other situations. For example, would health service user representatives involved in hospital decision-making record a similar pattern?

The constancy of the (ideal) yardstick enables it to be used to make comparisons over time and between industries and services. However, the ideal type is not sacrosanct and a response

- in the 'dialogue' between ideal type and evidence (Chapter 1) - is called for.

What is proposed here is that parent governors may be closer to a specific variation of the ideal type. The data suggest that there has been a propensity to increase and look more favourably on the active role of parent governors, whilst becoming more satisfied with the influence they possess. It is proposed that we can perceive a specific variation from the ideal, which I term the *incorporated consumer-citizen* and which is characterised by a tendency towards all-round activism together with satisfaction ~~with the influence~~ open to parent governors. This consumer-citizen is involved, through participatory structures, in the processes that shape the service in question and experiences a relatively low perceived sense of powerlessness. We can now, accordingly, identify three classifications:

- the *'ideal' consumer-citizen* who closely resembles the ideal type and who is the all-round activist, keen to have greater influence
- the *incorporated consumer-citizen* who tends towards all-round activism but is satisfied with the influence he or she has
- the *lesser consumer-citizen* who least resembles the ideal.

Incorporated consumer-citizens are not necessarily making key decisions. They are, however, involved sufficiently to obtain the level of influence that they want. Of course, their perception of

their rightful level of influence is likely to be affected by a number of influences and pressures, some of which may tend to deflect parent governors from seeking an active role representing parental interests. These influences and pressures are classified for the purposes of the brief discussion here into four groups: those that emanate from characteristics of the parent governor himself or herself; those from within the parent governor's school (including its governing body); those that are external to the school; and those that arise from what can be termed 'structural tensions'. The first (parent governor's own characteristics) include 'personality factors, social factors in parents' backgrounds' (Golby 1993: 82), attributes such as confidence and committee skills, and attitudes. Such attitudes may, for example, include feelings of deference to the teaching profession (Golby and Brigley 1989: 2).

The second set of influences and pressures (those from within the school) is highlighted in research on governors undertaken in the 1970s and in more recent work (Bacon 1978, Field 1993). Such work draws attention to professional dominance of the language and culture of education and to strategies aimed at forestalling or containing any reduction of professional power. Professionals may, for example, build up the 'mystique' surrounding their work so that lay people are encouraged to feel diffident about 'interfering'. One of the criticisms of participation in the running of organisations is that it can be a device by which to assimilate, and thereby weaken, 'possible dissenting constituencies' (Brehony 1992). Brigley, for example, noted that most parent governors

resort to close co-operation with the professionals as their best hope of coping with their workload and achieving some legitimacy for their work.... [They] come to form their views and judge their contributions in professional terms. Thus, many parents' remarks on testing under the national curriculum and grant-maintained schools clearly display a professional perspective (Brigley 1990: 6).

This echoes the observation in Bacon's study, carried out in the 1970s, that parent governors are forced to enter a 'de facto pupil relationship with the headteacher' (Bacon 1978: 129). Bacon also highlighted the more general 'subtle incorporation processes' by which headteachers steer governors to adopt a deferential role in relation to the professionals within the school. Recent research indicates that such subtle processes continue in some schools. One researcher, reflecting on the behaviour of a comprehensive school headteacher, comments:

Though I do not wish to imply that the degree of manipulation he, himself, employs is intentional or even probably conscious, the amount of jargon and esoteric educational terminology he uses is undeniable and the application of this technique succeeds in imposing his professionalism, maintaining distance and possibly intimidating governors in the nicest of ways (Field 1993: 169).

This vulnerability of parent governors to the (conscious or unconscious) strategies of school professionals may be related to

insufficient opportunities to be involved in processes of participation (at work, in neighbourhoods, in public services, etc), resulting in insufficient 'socialisation, or 'social training', for democracy' (Pateman 1970: 42). Though attempts to facilitate participation - including consumer participation - have increased¹¹, these are not sufficient, it might be argued, to form the kind of participatory society in which the habits and attitudes necessary for independent representative activity are widely diffused. It would not be surprising in this perspective to find that many parent governors are influenced less by any 'socialisation for participation' and more by 'institutionalisation', a process by which an organisation (in this case the school) inculcates or infuses those within it with its own set of values (Abrahamsson 1977: 120). Those who argue forcefully for participation to work and for headteachers to share decision-making, such as Sallis (1991), are arguing for a shift in values and for school professionals neither to keep governors at arms length nor to seek only to institutionalise them into professional ways of thinking.

The third set of influences and pressures (those external to the school) is wide and varied. Amongst these are training programmes and guidance that are developed by LEAs, diocesan authorities, central government, and other organisations such as AGIT (Action for Governor Information and Training). There is also a range of literature - guides in the form of commercially produced books which vary in nature and presentation, regularly

¹¹ Chapter 3, section 'The Participative Model'

published sources of advice (such as the journal *Managing Schools Today* and a weekly governor's page in the *Times Educational Supplement*), and ad hoc articles and papers in educational professional and academic publications which seep into the climate of understanding about governors. A further source of influence is Central Government through legislation, Ministerial speeches, official guidance, and so on. This is not an exhaustive outline of external influences and pressures.

Assessing the impact of these is extremely difficult. It is not surprising that some training programmes are criticised for being dominated by professionals (Turner *et al.* 1991). There are, more recently, examples of governors from different schools being encouraged to come together in mutually supportive groups and to have a say in the development of training programmes (Holt 1994), though whether this allows parent governors to develop without undue professional influence is not clear. The breadth of literature and commentary on parent governors provides some insight into the themes and contested issues that constitute the framework within which parent governors are situated - hence, they are drawn upon in the discussions here and in Chapter 5. The range of ideologies and interests they represent and how their manifestation in various media and modes of communication affect parent governors would be a study in itself. Some LEAs have, for example, 'clung more fiercely' to their influence over schools than others (Sallis 1993: 33). Here, it is sufficient to note that all the organisations seeking to influence or support parent governors do not necessarily have an interest

in developing their role as independent critics of the school system.

The fourth factor influencing parent governors is the product of 'structural tensions' - ie tendencies that are (to some extent) opposed to each other and which are an integral part of the institutional and conceptual framework within which parent governors are situated. Two such tensions have been highlighted¹². Firstly, there is that between *provider* and *consumer* roles. Parent governors' complicity in producer decisions (as members of the the body that has overall responsibility for the school and significant decision-making powers) may serve to eclipse their distinctively consumer role. Thus Golby writes of an 'essential problem of identity' and comments that a school governing body 'can hardly be a Board of Directors and a consumer council at one and the same time, though of course over time it may develop some of the functions of each' (Golby 1993:75). This latter observation - about developing some of the functions of each - echoes the point highlighted in the discussion in Chapter 5: namely, that the consumer-citizen ideal type encompasses the active dimension of *doing*, that it thereby acknowledges that consumer-citizens are, to a greater or lesser extent, concerned with making or modifying the goods and services they consume, and that parent governors constitute a formal, statutory example of this by virtue of their involvement in decision-making in schools. It may be that the peculiar position of parent governors (as compared with the

¹² Chapter 5

generality of parents) - in which they are directly involved in *doing* and working so closely with producers - underlies the trend in the data relating to *powerlessness/desire for influence*¹³.

Secondly, attention was drawn to the tension between the valuing of *ordinariness* and tendencies towards *professionalisation* (which may be seen as a 'structural tension' as it is concerned with a basic question about the nature of parent-governorship). Most governors appear to view training as important (Holt 1991), or, as one study concluded, many governors consider it 'necessary to aspire to some sort of expert status, which may be acquired through a mixture of training and experience over time' (Waring 1992: 78). Sallis argues strongly that training should not destroy the distinctive and valuable character of governors' contributions:

...it is healthy and necessary that the precious light of *ordinariness* should shine upon expert affairs, bringing to them an innocent common sense and experience gained in the outside world. This has implications for governor training. The object is not to produce shadow teachers, pretend inspectors, trainee managers, imitation accountants... (Sallis 1988:167-168).

The problem is that training and guidance, devised and shaped by those who are professionals or other employees within the school

¹³ Thus it should be noted that, if many parent governors tend to resemble the *incorporated consumer-citizen*, it does not automatically mean that this applies equally to parents. Many parent governors may be satisfied with their level of influence, whilst the parents they represent may not.

system, may nevertheless professionalise governors. Reviewing models of training, Waring concludes that there is implicit in these a clear intention to retain a special non-professional identity. Even so, he suggests that the result of increased training may well be the emasculation of governors as representatives of parents and the wider community (Waring 1992).

It is apparent that there are significant factors which tend to curb the activities and expectations of parent governors as vocal and influential consumer-citizen representatives - factors to do with parent governors' personal characteristics; the parent governor's school and professionals in it; influences external to the school; and 'structural tensions'. Consideration of these makes the finding of a tendency in the survey data towards the *incorporated consumer-citizen* less surprising.

These factors are, however, not the only influences on parent governors. It should not be assumed that all parent governors are intimidated and take a 'back seat' in school governance. A study of 19 school governing bodies (primary and secondary) found that in three-quarters of these, parent governors were prominent, occupying key positions such as chair of the governing body or of sub-committees, and in some instances being seen as influential and powerful participants (Golby and Appleby 1991). Other commentators suggest that whilst most governors are content to leave decision-making to the headteacher, many are frustrated by being used as rubber stamps (Field 1993). Cases of conflict between governors and heads show that some governors, including parent governors, are deeply dissatisfied with the

amount of power they find they have (Deem and Brehony 1993: 352). There is evidence of increasing willingness on the part of Catholic school governors, backed by parents, to challenge ecclesiastical authority (Arthur 1994). Deem and Brehony go so far as to suggest that 'conflict rather than partnership may now be a more common feature of relationships between governors, headteachers and schools' (Deem and Brehony 1993:340)

Experience clearly varies. Although the 1988 and 1992 surveys indicated a trend towards the *incorporated consumer-citizen*, it is not possible to generalise from this to parent governors generally given the small size of the sample and the variety of experience evident from other studies. It is conceivable that parent governors' expectations of the influence they ought to have could increase as the system of school government generally becomes more familiar to more people (and thereby 'socialisation for participation' becomes more widespread). Many parent governors might then become less like the *incorporated consumer-citizen*. Such reflections are, however, somewhat speculative. The extent to which parent governors will tend to resemble the *incorporated consumer-citizen* in future years, and how many will move towards or away from this variation of the ideal type, will depend on the kinds of factors discussed above and how they may change.

Implications for Future Work

In light of the experience gained in carrying out the study, I would identify three principal ways in which it may have been

undertaken differently to advantage. Firstly, it would have benefited from more extensive piloting of the elements which constitute the indicators of the consumer-citizen dimensions. This would have been most productively carried out as a qualitative exercise in which parent governors were encouraged to discuss as freely as possible aspects of their role as they saw it. Interviews were undertaken with parent governors before the 1988 survey, and these helped in the development of the questionnaire. However, a process of semi-structured interviews could have continued (in principle) much longer with a wider range of interviewees (in consequence the survey would have taken place a number of years later). This extended process of interviewing could then have interacted with the process of theoretical development so that ideas or hunches arising from that theoretical process could have been tested and explored through free-ranging interviews with parent governors. Such a process would have been more likely to produce indicators (in the form of questionnaire questions) with a more defensible base in terms of their validity than those used. Secondly, the 1988 survey would have benefited from additional efforts to obtain responses from the parent governors targeted (assuming that those efforts would have led to a significantly increases response rate). For example, on reflection, it may well have proved worthwhile to attempt to contact parent governors (the majority in the survey area) for whom no address was available and to whom I had to write via their schools (resource constraints and uncertainty as to whether mail would reach the parent governors led to my deciding not to write to them a second time). The small size of the sample, exacerbated by sample attrition in 1992,

proved a constraint in analysing the data and drawing conclusions. Thirdly, there are arguments for the inclusion of 'ordinary' parents as hypothesised consumer-citizens in the study. It would have enhanced significantly the findings if the responses of such parents could have been compared with those of parent governors.

More research needs to be undertaken on a range of questions and hypotheses that have emerged from this work. Two of the lessons from this work, just highlighted, are particularly important and can be stated in general terms as goals for future research:

- developing improved, more demonstrably valid, empirical indicators of the consumer-citizen dimensions
- investigating groups of parents other than parent governors, in order to examine how far they resemble the consumer-citizen ideal type and how far they differ from parents acting in a representative capacity.

In relation to parent governors, some of the key findings and issues suggested by the study are highlighted and implications for further work indicated briefly below:

checking. This emerged as the most significant activity in terms of both approval and practice. What matters are parent governors looking into? In what ways are they undertaking this *checking*? What are the specific

processes and outcomes involved? How deeply are parent governors able to delve into the matters subject to *checking*? These questions raise issues to do with the resources available to parent governors to enable them to carry out this kind of activity, resources such as information, access to disinterested professional advice and time (the latter especially relevant in the context of the array of duties that now befall governors).

lobbying and other aspects of *acting as a member of a political community*. Strong approval was given to lobbying but most parent governors surveyed in 1992 appeared not to be involved in actually doing it. The difference could be explained if most parent governors feel they have no reason to lobby. The context in which governors are operating is changing, however. There is continuing pressure to diminish the role of local education authorities and increase the numbers of grant maintained schools, and the establishment of new central government agencies, such as the Funding Agency for Schools and Education Associations (Department for Education/Welsh Office 1992). Will parent and other governors become more involved in attempts to influence central government and its agencies?

applying and doing. Approval for these increased significantly between 1988 and 1992, suggesting an acceptance of the enhanced role for governors brought about by the Government's reforms. Will this trend

continue so that they are as highly approved as *checking* and *acting as a member of a political community*?

choosing. Whilst choice and consumerist perspectives on schooling attracted low levels of approval, most indicated that in practice they were trying to provide parents with choices within the school and to inform parents about choices (within and between schools). We can hypothesise that this emphasis is likely to increase as schools continue to operate in a more market-like environment (Glatter and Woods forthcoming). How governors and school managers approach the question of providing greater choice within school will be of particular interest, given its relative lack of attention in the UK.

class, gender and community. The nature of the relationship between factors such as these and variations in consumer-citizen attitudes and experience needs further exploration, focusing in particular on the effects of interactions between social cleavages like class and gender. Proximity to the consumer-citizen ideal was not a simple function of social class. Of particular interest was the association between proximity to the consumer-citizen ideal (particularly positive attitudes to choice and consumerism) and working class females. Their perspective on the practical implementation of *choosing* would be especially interesting. It would be beneficial in any such research to consider implications for defining

social class. For example, differences may not be due to social class position as such, but may be related to differing class perceptions between men and women. The important variable may be the class 'she feels herself to be' not that which is allocated by the researcher according to head of household's occupation (Delamont 1980: 176).

types of school. Approval of consumer-citizen activity was most marked at secondary schools (especially in relation to *choosing*). Parent governors at primary schools, church schools and special schools were less approving. The difference between secondary and primary only became apparent in the later survey. Does this represent a trend that will continue? Are there factors characteristic of church schools and special schools (perhaps, in different ways, greater deference to authority - in one case religious, in the other professional) that reduce the propensity to be involved in decision-making at school government level?

incorporated consumer-citizen. There was a trend amongst the parent governors surveyed towards a specific variant of the ideal, ie the incorporated consumer-citizen who tends towards activism but is broadly content with the influence he or she has. The findings would lead us to hypothesise that most parent governors tend to resemble this variant and that there will be a continuing trend in the direction of the

incorporated consumer-citizen in future years (though some speculative thoughts on the possibility of shifts in the opposite direction have also been raised).

Further research should not be limited to *parents* (either generally or in their capacity as parent governors) as consumer-citizens. They are not the only group of consumer-citizens in relation to schooling. Pupils, for example, are consumer-citizens and the kind of empirical enquiry directed at parents can be undertaken in relation to pupils. Pupils can resemble the consumer-citizen ideal more or less closely. It is likely that their *resources* and *context* differ significantly from parents. It is also possible, perhaps likely, that the ends they wish to achieve and the extent to which they are empowered are markedly different from their parents. Conflicts between groups of consumer-citizens are not assumed not to exist. On the contrary, tensions and contradictions are considered within the conceptual framework as endemic and ways of handling them need to be addressed. Other consumer-citizen groups in relation to schooling are employers (of those educated in schools), local communities (in relation to their local schools), and the general public (who draw benefits from and pay for publicly-funded schooling).

This study should be conceived as a beginning for the consumer-citizen concept (and its various characterising elements and models of empowerment). It is an attempt to construct a means of studying educational systems which is sensitive to the needs and preferences of those served by them, avoids the simplistic

presumptions of narrow consumerism and confinement within a 'market model' for schooling, and avoids the presumption involved in systems tightly controlled by professionals and administrative and political decision-makers (namely that they know best). Further critical assessment, use and testing of the ideal type is needed if it is to prove itself of continuing worth as a conceptual framework with which to approach the education system.

Pursuing Popper's simile of theories as nets in which we try to catch the real world (Chapter 4), the original, theoretically-constructed consumer-citizen concept has shown itself to be a net worth expanding and embellishing and casting again in the same waters to capture more of that world. It is a net also that can be cast into oceans new, beyond school government and beyond schooling generally - wherever there is a concern to explore systematically the experience of those who use, receive, pay for or indirectly benefit from goods and services.

APPENDIX A

THE SURVEYS: FURTHER DETAILS AND LINK WITH THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT WORK

The empirical work in the study is based on two surveys. The first, referred to as the *1988 survey*, involved contacting parent governors in the districts of Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan (which together form the county of South Glamorgan) and the Cynon Valley district (which is part of Mid Glamorgan). The second, referred to as the *1992 survey*, involved a follow-up survey of as many as possible of those who had responded to the 1988 survey.

Details of the administration, response rates and basic data relating to the surveys are reported in this appendix and in Chapter 6. The surveys are also placed below the context of the developing theoretical concerns of the study (including the typology of participatory action worked upon in the early stages and later incorporated within the consumer-citizen ideal type). The questionnaires are reproduced in Appendix B.

Early Thinking Prior to the 1988 Survey

The underlying purpose of the study was to explore the issue of consumerism and school education, with a specific focus on parent governors. In getting the study underway prior to the 1988 survey, I had four key concerns in mind. Firstly, I had begun to develop the notion of the consumer-citizen as in some way a more satisfactory

notion than that of the consumer. Some ideas concerning the rationale behind and nature of the consumer-citizen had been outlined, but these were rudimentary 'first-thoughts' (Woods 1988a). One of the purposes of the 1988 survey was to assist in the process of specifying more clearly and in greater detail the nature of this proposed concept.

Secondly, I wanted to gain a better understanding of consumer participation generally, and parent participation in school government particularly. It seemed that the development of a typology of a participatory action would be helpful in doing this. Kogan *et al.* (1984) had developed four models of governing body (the accountable, advisory, supportive and mediatory). Whilst they found that they could categorise the governing bodies they studied as predominantly one or other of the models, they recognised that this was an imperfect process: '...in their practice governing bodies resist tidy categorisation. Their various purposes are not clearly differentiated and they swing between them according to the situations and demands that present themselves'. (Kogan *et al.* 1984: 164). I believed that a typology of actions could be more useful. This would be applicable both to bodies and to individuals. In principle, their activities could be classified according to the typology and each subject (whether a body or individual) would attract different mixes of classificatory 'labels' according to the different patterns of activity that he, she or it displayed. In this way the typology would be more sensitive than models (later in the study, it became clear that the power of models to describe broad patterns could be utilised together with means of measuring relatively subtle differences

between individual subjects, by use of the consumer-citizen ideal type as reported in the main text). The typology is discussed in more detail below.

Thirdly, I wanted to explore the implications that changes in the responsibilities and membership of governing bodies were having. The requirement of the 1980 Education Act, that governing bodies have at least two (county or controlled schools) or one (aided or special agreement schools) elected parent governor(s), was implemented in 1986, whilst more radical reforms to governing bodies had been enacted in the 1986 Education Act. It was evident, too, that further changes were planned, as part of the 1988 Education Act and subsequent legislation (the reforms of the 1980s and their historical context are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3). Governing bodies were becoming substantially different institutions than when even such a (then) recent study as Kogan *et al.*'s study was undertaken. More widely, the role ascribed to parents and parent governors with regard to school education was being discussed more and more in consumerist terms (see Chapter 1).

Fourthly, I wanted to introduce into the exploration on which I was embarked the views and perceptions of parent governors themselves. This meant that I needed to consider how my theoretical constructions (the consumer-citizen concept and the typology of participatory action) could be used in empirical work involving parent governors.

Typology of Participatory Action

In a study of Scottish School Councils, Macbeth *et al.* (1980: 23-24) had set out a typology of participatory action, which consisted of: *deciding*, within which two types could be distinguished - rule-making (for example, deciding whether school buildings should be let to community bodies and on what conditions) and rule-applying (for example, dealing with specific applications for use of school buildings); *ensuring*, concerned with checking on performance and accountability; *advising*, which Macbeth *et al.* identify with exercising influence as well as the giving of advice; *communicating*, which includes access to information, publicity (the provision of information generally) and communication (specific information to particular people). More recently, Macbeth (1989: 131) has set out his four types, each with two subsidiary modes:

Macbeth's Typology

Informing -

- (i) Making information accessible on request
- (ii) Publicising information

Advising -

- (i) Unrestricted (petitioning)
- (ii) On request (consultation)

Ensuring

- (i) Calling to account (requesting explanations)
- (ii) Rendering of account (explaining)

Deciding

- (i) Policy decisions (rule-making)
- (ii) Executive decisions (rule-applying)

To be confident of applying the typology to a range of participatory bodies, the typology needed to be capable of covering all of the possible 'outward' activities of such bodies, ie those actions relating to agencies or people concerned in some way with the service in question, which can include the producing organisation, managers, consumers, politicians with power or influence with regard to the service, and so on ('internal' activity such as that concerned with the body's internal organisation or background research - though not surveys of consumers or investigations of performance - is not included in the typology).

However, in the light of my experience working in the field of consumer representation (in various sectors, including social security, the water industry, education and broadcasting), the Macbeth typology as it stood appeared limited. It did not adequately cover all 'outward' activities. As a result, I began to modify it (Woods 1988b in relation to collective consumer participation and Woods 1989: 189-190 in relation to individual participation, ie individuals or families working with producers/professionals). This process of modification drew upon my experience as a researcher and advocate of the consumer interest for the National and Welsh Consumer Councils.

Much of the work in which I was engaged for the Consumer Councils concerned proposals for new consumer bodies. These proposals were based on an understanding of existing bodies, assessments of how the consumer interest could be best represented, and a

translation of these perceptions in to what was considered an 'achievable ideal' in given circumstances. They are practical expressions of the essential elements of consumer bodies and useful aids to clarifying a more general typology. Descriptions of the roles and functions of proposed consumer bodies which I was closely involved in developing are published in House of Commons Committee on Welsh affairs 1982: 161, National Consumer Council 1984: 284, Welsh Consumer Council 1985: 5-6. In these (none of which were concerned with bodies intended to have decision-making powers), virtually all of the formal activities fell within the three activity-types of ensuring, advising and communicating (NB my definitions of these differ slightly from those of Macbeth above in order to make them more comprehensive - see Figure A.1). Thus ensuring included, for example, examining and monitoring policies, spending and future plans, monitoring standards and services, and ensuring that procedures, such as those for consumer complaints and redress, are effective; advising included 'making representations' or 'giving views' to the service provider or relevant Government Ministers; communicating included receiving information from the service provider and can be as wide as taking steps to 'inform consumers of matters of consumer interest' and 'publicise the existence and functions' of the body concerned or as specific as publishing an annual report.

A unique experimental social security consumers' committee, which I was instrumental in setting up and monitoring, provided insight into the practical workings of a consumer body in a service where none had existed before: the committee established lines of

communication in many different ways (with management, social security clients, the public generally and local politicians) and facilitated better communication between the social security system and other agencies; it advised by means of a problem-solving approach (defining problems, seeking solutions and making recommendations) - the adoption of such a systematic approach was seen as important by the committee and the report on its work concluded that it 'helped the Committee to gain credibility and to win the confidence of the DHSS observers' (Welsh Consumer Council 1987: 12); the committee ensured - one of its main aims was to 'play a constructive role in ensuring that the [social security] office is welcoming, easy to use and offers a high standard of service to claimants' and the report on the committee concluded that it had 'helped ensure that...improvements met clients' needs adequately' (Welsh Consumer Council 1987: 17,10; see also Woods 1988b 11).

Whilst confirming the importance of ensuring, advising and communicating (with slightly modified definitions), the above experience suggested to me that alterations to the Macbeth typology needed to be made. Firstly, 'deciding' needed to be divided into two activities - between deciding matters of policy and deciding on matters of day-to-day management. The two can be distinguished for analytical purposes, and I believed that, for the purposes of a typology of participatory action, the respective responsibilities and activities were sufficiently divergent to merit doing so. It seemed to me, however, that Macbeth's terms 'rule-making' and 'rule-applying' were not comprehensive or accurate enough to describe the distinction. I therefore chose the terms 'policy making' (where a

participatory body has the power to decide or amend policy, as distinct from detailed managerial decisions) and 'executive decision-making' (where a participatory body has the power to make detailed management decisions, such as hiring and firing staff).

Consumer bodies in the UK generally do not have decision-making powers on matters of policy, still less executive or managerial authority. School governing bodies are therefore distinctive in this context in having the authority and duty to decide policy. An example of consumer bodies with significant managerial powers are the caisses in France, which are semi-autonomous public bodies with responsibility for income support. Local caisses control the management of social security offices, deciding on matters such as opening hours and facilities for registration of the public (National Consumer Council 1984: 288-290). The limits of how far a policy-making body, such as a school governing body, can go before encroaching on 'managerial territory' is not always clear and may be interpreted differently by different bodies.

Secondly, I believed that the activity of 'influencing' could be conceived as a category in itself. Influencing can be difficult to observe and measure (see Richardson 1983: 26, for example, who discusses the difficulties of identifying 'power' in participation schemes). However, it is an extremely important activity as it is the crux of a consumer body's *raison d'être*. It is about having a real effect in changing the course of events, either in a single instance or isolated cases, or a pervading influence over a period of time.

Influence and power are bed-fellows. Weber (Gerth and Mills 1970: 180, 226), in a discussion of power, defines it as 'the chance of a man or of a number of men to realize their own will in a communal action...' and cites as one of the key aspects of democracy the 'minimization of the authority of officialdom in the interests of expanding the sphere of influence of 'public opinion'...'. Macbeth *et al.* (1980: 23) state succinctly that 'Influence is a form of power'. There is no necessary relationship between influence and the possession of formal powers to decide matters: a body may have such powers but in practice not exercise real power or influence, whilst a voluntary body may be influential. In evaluating the non-statutory social security consumers' committee mentioned above, great importance was attached to its ability to bring about changes of benefit to claimants and much effort was made to document and report where it had been successful (Welsh Consumer Council 1987: 8,10,14-16). The point about representing the consumer interest is to seek to influence events: the activity of influencing, and the process of representing views, arguing a case and negotiating which run with it, involves a positive intent to affect the course of events to a greater extent than with the activity of advising. Advising tends towards the formal - the giving of views in response to a consultation exercise, for example. Influencing tends to be a diffuse activity which encompasses formal and informal activities.

Influencing can be characterised as a *process*, but not one which encompasses a given range of specific activities: it is central to the role of consumer participation and denotes, with a slightly different emphasis, the whole complex and unpredictable process of

'bargaining' which Ann Richardson placed at the heart of her study of participation (Richardson 1983: 72). It is, however, wider than the process of bargaining and negotiating itself. Influencing can also be seen as an *outcome* - of some, much or all that a consumer body does. Influencing could be conceived as a distinct category because, whilst a participatory body may do all the other activities in the typology, it may still lack influence, or even fail to energetically seek influence; and because, at the same time, the process of influencing suffuses all other activities.

The typology as I amended it is set out in figure A.1. Having established this, I took some of the most important powers and duties of governing bodies as provided by the 1986 Education Act and as proposed for (later enacted in) the 1988 Education Act and classified them according to the typology. The results of this are set out in figure A.2.

Figure A.1: Typology of Participatory Action

- **policy making:** where a participatory body has the power to decide or amend policy (but not necessarily to make detailed managerial decisions)
- **executive decision making:** where a participatory body has the power to make detailed management decisions (such as hiring and firing staff)
- **influencing:** the process whereby a participatory body seeks to influence, and where successful actually influences, events (without necessarily having formal powers); the process of influencing carries with it a more positive intent to affect the course of events than of advising (see below)
- **advising:** where a participatory body makes suggestions, gives a point of view and/or is (formally or informally) consulted
- **ensuring:** where the performance of the service provider is monitored and evaluated by the participatory body, and/or is responsible for making sure that certain things are done
- **communicating:** where a participatory body gives and/or receives information (this may involve service managers, politicians, consumers, general public, etc)

Figure A.2: Powers and duties of school governing bodies classified according to the typology of participatory action*

<u>power/duty</u>	<u>type of activity</u>
• modify LEA's curriculum policy	policy making
• ensure national curriculum followed	ensuring
• record and keep up to date a written statement on sex education	policy making
• ensure that a balanced view of political issues is presented in school	ensuring
• decide how budget is spent (or decide to delegate to head)(#)	policy making/ executive decision making
• ensure accurate accounts kept (#)	ensuring
• ensure free educational provision in school-time (except some music tuition)	ensuring
• decide how many staff should work at school (#)	policy making/ executive decision making
• appoint and dismiss staff (#)	executive decision making
• may agree general principles or specific guidance for the head on discipline	policy making
• determine charging policy	policy making
• supply local education authority (LEA) with their curriculum aims and annual returns	communicating
• supply parents with prospectus and annual report	communicating
• hold annual meeting for parents	communicating
• right to be consulted and to comment on LEA's admission arrangements	advising
• direction of the conduct of the school	policy making/ executive decision making

at schools with a delegated budget

* This is not intended to be a complete list of powers/duties. They were taken from the 1986 Education Act and 1988 Education Reform Act and do not necessarily take into account subsequent changes.

Development of 1988 Survey Questionnaire

In addition to the work and experience reported above, preparation for the 1988 survey included semi-structured interviews with four parent governors and non-participant observation of a governing body meeting.

The typology of participatory action was used as a framework for devising the questions on the questionnaire. A key aim of the survey was to identify how parent governors considered their role and that of the governing body ought to be developing. Which issues and types of activity did they view as appropriate to school government? Other questions were designed to probe into the extent of parent governors' involvement in decision-making, parent governors' perceptions of the distinctiveness (or otherwise) of their role, difficulties they encounter, means of communicating with parents, as well as information on occupation, gender, training and support, etc, which would be of likely interest in analysing the data (in the event, the way in which analysis of the data was approached underwent a fundamental re-think before undertaking the 1992 survey, due to developments in the theoretical construction work - the rationale behind this re-think is reported below).

The draft questionnaire was piloted with half a dozen parent governors and modified as a result.

The survey was directed at parent governors on the old governing bodies which ceased to exist in August 1988 and which were

superseded by the new arrangements required by the 1986 Education Act. Consideration was given to delaying the survey until the new governing bodies were constituted, but it was decided not to do this for the following reasons. I concluded that I would have to wait at least a year to give new parent governors the opportunity to experience their role. A survey of parent governors on the (then) existing governing bodies would benefit from their time on those bodies and their experience of the gradual implementation of aspects of the 1986 Education Act. Finally, further empirical work could be undertaken at a later date to gain some insight to changes under the new arrangements (this manifested itself as the follow-up 1992 survey). It was planned to approach parent governors from all types of local education authority (LEA) school: secondary, primary, special and church.

Survey Areas

The areas in which it was decided to conduct the survey were Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan (which comprise South Glamorgan) and the Cynon Valley (part of Mid Glamorgan). The three areas constitute in many respects contrasting locations¹. The Cynon Valley developed and declined with the coal-mining industry and is characterised by markedly low proportions of professional and middle class groups and a relatively high level of unemployment. Cardiff is a city which, like many others, has a continuum of areas from the affluent to the

¹ Sources for statistics quoted in this section are: Welsh Inter Censal Survey, Cardiff: Welsh Office, 1986; Digest of Welsh Statistics, Cardiff: Welsh Office, 1985; Education Yearbook, Harlow: Longman, 1987

deprived. It also has significant communities of ethnic minorities. The Vale of Glamorgan is largely rural, though it is not so large or sparsely populated as many other areas of rural Britain and contains a port (Barry).

At the time of the 1988 survey, there were indicators of the Cynon Valley being a more settled population: less than 8% had been resident less than one year, compared with more than 13% in Cardiff and 11% in the Vale. Its primary schools tend to be smaller (an average of 138 pupils, compared with 217 in Cardiff/Vale area). There was virtually no difference in the average size of secondary schools (just over 1,000 pupils), though the range in the Vale was wider (from 448 pupils to 1,828 pupils). Both LEAs covering the areas had put on training courses for school governors, with the help of their respective county's federation of parent-teacher associations.

The areas contained variations in socio-economic factors likely to have some bearing on the kinds of people who become parent governors and the perceptions they have of their role. It was considered that a sample drawn from these three districts would produce variations and patterns in parent governors characteristics and experiences that to an extent would reflect those in other parts of England and Wales.

1988 Survey: Distribution and Returns

More than 270 questionnaires were distributed in July 1988. The number of parent governor places in the survey areas totalled 226, whilst the number of actual parent governors was taken as 224 (see details under Cynon Valley and South Glamorgan below). More questionnaires were sent out than the total number of parent governors because of the distribution method (via each headteacher in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan) and because most primary schools were grouped under one governing body. The Cynon Valley questionnaires were posted directly to named parent governors at their home addresses. All questionnaires were accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope (SAE) which the parent governor was invited to use in order to return the completed questionnaire.

Distribution details were as follows:

Cynon Valley (total number of parent governor places - 64; number of actual parent governors 63, as one sat on two governing bodies): As I had been given by the LEA (Mid Glamorgan) the names and addresses of all parent governors in all types of schools in the district, I was able to post questionnaires directly to each of them, together with a standard covering letter and SAE.

South Glamorgan (ie Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan, total number of parent governor places - 162; actual number taken as 161 since it was known from the returns that one parent governor sat on two governing bodies but not known how many others did): the LEA policy was not to release parent governors' names and

addresses in any circumstances. Their best advice was to send questionnaires via headteachers, which I decided to do. Each head was sent an explanatory letter, together with one (for primary schools) or two (secondary and special) sealed envelopes marked 'Parent Governor' and containing a questionnaire, the standard covering letter and SAE.

Because distribution to most parent governors was via headteachers, it was not possible to send a reminder directly to those parent governors who had not replied. Expense was also a consideration in carrying out a second mailing. Rather than send a reminder by means of headteachers (there was no way of knowing if they would be willing to pass on a letter a second time), I looked for an alternative means of communication in all three survey areas. Hence, in August 1988, I sent a 'reminder' letter to all local newspapers covering the survey areas. Although I could not monitor all the papers to see if it was printed, I know that it did appear in the main ones (Western Mail and South Wales Echo) and a number of free papers. It is difficult to judge the effectiveness of this approach, but questionnaires did continue to return for some time after the letters appeared. Questionnaire returns were delayed by the postal strike which started at the end of August 1988 and continued for several weeks in Cardiff.

Sixty-six parent governors completed and returned questionnaires as follows:

	no.	response rate
Cynon Valley	13	21%
South Glamorgan	53	33%
Total	66	29%

Basic data relating to these returns are reported below.

Types of school covered by parent governors

	no.	%
(i)		
primary	49	72.1
secondary	16	23.5
unknown	3	4.4
	<hr/> 68*	
(ii)		
church	16	23.5
special	6	8.8
other	46	67.6
	<hr/> 68*	

* Two of the respondents sat as parent governors on two governing bodies and their replies are counted here in respect of both bodies

Position on governing body

	no.	%
chairperson**	4	5.9
vice-chairperson**	8	11.8
ordinary member	56	82.4
	<hr/> 68*	

* Two of the respondents sat as parent governors on two governing bodies and their replies are counted here in respect of both bodies

** This is position held at time of survey

Length of time as parent governor

	no.	%
1 yr or less	10	15.2
2yrs	11	16.7
3 yrs	36	54.5
4 yrs or more	9	13.6
	<hr/> 66	

Possession of teaching qualifications

	no.	%
with	12	18.2
without	54	81.2
	<hr/> 66	

Social class, based on occupation of head of household

(who this is was determined by the respondent)

	no.	%
I higher professional	25	37.9
II intermediate	18	27.3
IIIN skilled non-manual	8	12.1
IIIM skilled non-manual	7	10.6
IV semi-skilled	3	4.5
V unskilled	0	0.0
other	5	7.6
	<hr/> 66	

(Social classes are based on the Registrar General's classification of occupations {Office of Population Censuses and Surveys 1980}. Higher professional includes judges, chartered accountants, senior civil servants, doctors, scientists, engineers etc.; intermediate includes 'lower' professionals {eg teachers, physiotherapists}, managers, farmers. 'Others' consists of those whose occupation could not be classified on the information given, the retired, students, single parents with no paid employment.)

Gender

	no.	%
male	31	47.0
female	35	53.0
	<hr/> 66	

Key points from the above tables are that:

- approximately three-quarters of the sample of parent governors covered primary schools (nearly 80% of schools in the survey areas are primary, though many were grouped under one governing body - there could therefore be a slight over representation of primary parent governors in the sample)

- nearly a quarter of parent governors were from church schools (note that 19% of schools in the survey areas were church schools, which suggests that these parent governors are slightly over represented)
- the vast majority were ordinary members of their governing body
- 70% had served three years or more
- just over one in six had a teaching qualification
- almost two-thirds of the parent governors were from the two highest, professional and managerial social classes; whilst we do not know whether this fairly reflects the composition of parent governors in the survey areas, it is known that governors nationally tend to be in professional and managerial occupations (Deem 1992)
- there was a fairly even split between male and female.

Training and information

	no.	%
had received some	44	66.7
had received none	21	31.2
no response	1	1.5
	<u>66</u>	

Whether sufficient support received

	no.	%
had sufficient support	38	57.6
had not	21	31.8
no response	7	10.6
	<u>66</u>	

Parent governors of schools with parent-teacher associations

	no.	%
with	58	87.9
without	8	12.1
	<u>66</u>	

Nature of involvement with PTA (Parent-Teachers Association)

	no.	%
presently involved in its activities	41	62.1
formerly involved in its activities	24	36.4*
present committee member	25	37.9
former committee member	22	33.3*
former chairperson	12	18.2
present chairperson	7	10.6
former secretary	4	6.1
present secretary	1	1.5
not involved	7	10.6
not applicable	8	12.1
	<hr/> 66	

NB: respondents could respond positively to more than one option

*These figures could be depleted as a result of respondents who have presently and formerly been involved or been a committee member, but who only ticked 'presently...' on the questionnaire

Almost 9 out of ten were at a school with a PTA.

There was evidence of strong links with PTAs: almost 4 out of 5 had been or were currently involved with the PTA in some form or other. 63% were presently involved in PTA activities; just over a third were presently members of the PTA committee and just over a sixth had been chairperson of the PTA. One in ten were currently chairperson of the PTA.

How parents communicate with parent governors

	no.	%
contact parent governor		
when they want to	58	87.9
at PTA meetings	37	56.1
at annual parents' meetings	34	51.5
at meetings or 'surgeries'		
called by parent governor	2	3.0
other	11	16.7
	<hr/> 66	

NB: respondents could respond positively to more than one option

The vast majority said that parents contacted them when they want to, the main venues for doing this being PTA meetings and annual parents' meetings. Presumably, the greater frequency of the former helps explain the higher percentage communicating at PTA meetings compared with the once-yearly parents' meeting which specifically involves the governing body.

A negligible number indicated meetings or 'surgeries' called by the parent governor him- or herself (though this may have increased since the new governing bodies came into being).

How parent governors communicate with parents

	no.	%
by attending school functions	49	74.2
at annual parents' meetings	42	63.6
at PTA meetings	35	53.0
written means	17	25.8
meetings called by parent governor	6	9.1
survey of parents	1	1.5
other	11	16.7
no response	1	1.5
	—	
	66	

Looking at both the above tables, two things stand out:

- annual parents' meetings are not the premier means of communication
- there is a suggestion that they are seen more as a means of parent governors communicating with parents (64%) than parents communicating with parent governors (51%).

Development of the Consumer-Citizen as an Ideal Type

The detailed argument underpinning the consumer-citizen ideal type is contained in the main text. Here, the intention is to explain the role of the typology of participatory action (TPA), outlined above, in developing this.

Work on the TPA was, as it turned out, a formative process rather than an end in itself. As I pursued my ideas on the consumer-citizen concept it gradually became clear that its specification would result in a theoretical type of greater general applicability than the TPA. The consumer-citizen ideal type was conceived as a typification of consumers everywhere, ie those who use, receive, pay for or indirectly benefit from all kinds of goods and services. The elements of the TPA would be subsumed within this ideal type.

The dimensions of the consumer-citizen ideal type were developed utilising the work on the TPA and on the more broadly conceived models of empowerment (which were constructed between the 1988 and 1992 surveys and are set out in chapter 3). *Doing* is an overarching description of consumer-citizen action aimed at affecting the product or service. It thus includes the TPA activities of 'policy making' and 'executive decision-making', as well as activity such as modifying or customising products. *Checking* and *applying* represent different aspects of 'ensuring'. They reflect the differing emphases of the empowerment models with which they are associated (respectively, the personal control and quality assurance models). *Participating* incorporates 'advising' and 'communicating' (its definition is broadened to involvement in decision-making affecting the school system if we turn to the generality of parents as opposed to parent governors²). *Choosing, acting as a member of a political community* and *powerlessness/desire for more influence* have no direct counterparts in the TPA. The TPA category of

² Chapter 6, section 'Measuring the Consumer-Citizen Profile Dimensions'

‘influencing’ has become, in the conceptual framework represented by the consumer-citizen concept, a concern with the underlying theme of empowerment and the typification of consumer-citizens as being relatively powerless and as seeking to achieve greater influence (as represented in the dimension *powerlessness/desire for more influence*).

The strength of the consumer-citizen ideal type is its basis in an appreciation of the range and creativity of consumer activity, explored in the context of empowerment models. I needed, nevertheless, to find a way of operationalising the ideal type as a yardstick which could be used in empirical work. The dimensions of the consumer-citizen concept provided a structure for approaching empirical data. I was able to use data from the 1988 survey to develop indicators of these dimensions and to measure the extent to which parent governors resembled the theoretical construction. Questions first conceived as relating to ‘policy-making’ and ‘executive decision-making’ were used as indicators of *doing*, questions on ‘ensuring’ divided appropriately between *checking* and *applying*, questions on ‘advising’ and ‘communicating’ used in relation to *participating*. With regard to *powerlessness/desire for more influence*, questions were available concerning the influence of parent governors and of governing bodies, whilst indicators of attitudes towards *choosing* were gleaned from questions relating to seeing parents as consumers and the importance of choice. The indicator questions are set out in more detail in Chapter 6 and the means by which profile and dimension scores were calculated are explained in Appendix C.

The 1992 Survey

The 1992 questionnaire was piloted with three parent governors who provided detailed comments on the draft and with whom discussions were held. The questionnaire was, as a result, modified before despatch.

In June 1992, as many as possible of the parent governors who had responded to the 1988 survey and for whom consumer-citizen profile scores had been calculated were contacted. Profile scores had been calculated for 61 respondents (see Appendix C). Of these, I had the names and addresses of 49 (the remainder were those who had originally been contacted via their school and who had not included their name and address on their completed 1988 questionnaire). The questionnaire was sent with a covering letter and a pre-paid envelope for its return. Three weeks following this, a reminder letter (accompanied by another copy of the questionnaire and pre-paid envelope) was sent to those who had not replied.

Thirty-seven of those contacted returned completed questionnaires. A further six were returned unopened indicating that the person had moved to another address. Six were not returned.

My target had been to achieve an attrition rate of 50% or less (ie for a half or more of the 61 1988 respondents to complete questionnaires). Perusal of the details of a wide range of longitudinal studies (in Young *et al.* 1991) suggested that this would be a reasonable aim for a study which did not keep annual contact with

its subjects (the most nearly comparable study was 'Coping with Early Parenthood' which had contacted parents in 1979/1980 and then again in 1984, yielding a sample attrition of 50.9%).

Despite not having the names and addresses of 12 1988 respondents, the sample attrition in 1992 was better than the 50% target: it was 36%, 24 respondents being lost to the survey.

Basic data concerning the 37 1992 respondents (16 of whom were still parent governors at the time of responding and four were other types of governor) are as follows:

Types of school covered by parent governors		
	no.	%
(i)		
primary	26	60.5
secondary	17	39.5
	<hr/> 43*	
(ii)		
church	5	13.2
special	2	5.3
other	31	81.6
	<hr/> 38**	

* Seven respondents were on both primary and secondary school governing bodies and have been included in both categories

** One respondent was on the governing bodies of a special school and an 'other' school - she is included in both categories

Position on governing body		
	no.	%
is/has been chairperson*	8	21.6
is/has been vice-chairperson*	4	10.8
ordinary member	25	67.6
	<hr/> 32*	

* This represents the highest office reached: chairpersons who had been vice-chairpersons are not included in the latter category

Possession of teaching qualifications		
	no.	%
with	6	16.2
without	31	83.8
	<hr/> 37	

Social class, based on occupation of head of household

(who this is was determined by the respondent)

	no.	%
I higher professional	16	43.2
II intermediate	6	16.2
IIIN skilled non-manual	4	10.8
IIIM skilled non-manual	6	16.2
IV semi-skilled	1	2.7
V unskilled	0	0.0
other	4	10.8
	<hr/> 37	

(Social classes are based on the Registrar General's classification of occupations {Office of Population Censuses and Surveys 1980}. Higher professional includes judges, chartered accountants, senior civil servants, doctors, scientists, engineers etc.; intermediate includes 'lower' professionals {eg teachers, physiotherapists}, managers, farmers. 'Others' consists of those whose occupation could not be classified on the information given, the retired, students, single parents with no paid employment.)

Gender	no.	%
male	17	45.9
female	20	54.1
	<u>37</u>	

APPENDIX B

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES

The following pages reproduce:

- 1) the questionnaire completed by the initial sample survey of parent governors in 1988 (the *1988 survey*)
- 2) the questionnaire used in the follow-up survey of respondents in 1992 (the *1992 survey*)

QUESTIONNAIRE TO PARENT GOVERNORS

-
-

3. Is it/are they:
 church school(s) special school(s)

-yrs mnts

-

-

9. Are you: male female

- yes no

if yes, in what way (if any) are you/have you been involved with it?

(CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY)
now previously

1	2
3	4
5	6
7	8

9 10

11. Do you intend to stand as a parent governor for the new governing bodies to be established in September 1988?

yes no

if no, what are your reasons?

12. Have you been given any training or information on the role of parent governor?

yes no

if yes, what kind and from whom?

13. Do you get sufficient support as a governor?

yes no

if no, what kind of support would you like?

14. Would you say that parent governors make a contribution different from that of other governors?

yes no

if yes, in what way is it different?

15. Could you give an example of an issue on which a parent governor (yourself or another) has exerted an influence?

16. How do parents communicate with you?

(CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY)

contact you when they want to	1
meetings or 'surgeries' called by you	2
annual parents' meeting	3
at PTA meetings	4
other (specify)	5

17. How do you communicate with parents?

(CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY)

meetings called by you	1
annual parents' meeting	2
PTA meeting	3
written means (explain)	4
.....	
surveys of parents	5
attend school functions	6
other (specify)	7

18. A list of actions appears below. School governing bodies are required by law to carry out some of these; others are duties proposed by the current Education Reform Bill or are not legal requirements at all. Considering each in turn, how appropriate are they *in your view* for a school governing body to carry out?

	very appro- priate	fairly appro- priate	slightly inappro- priate	highly inappro- priate
making changes to the school curriculum	1	2	3	4
keeping curriculum up to date	1	2	3	4
advising headteacher on the curriculum	1	2	3	4
deciding policy on sex education	1	2	3	4
deciding general principles on discipline	1	2	3	4
advising headteacher on discipline	1	2	3	4
deciding numbers and type of staff needed	1	2	3	4
directing the conduct of the school	1	2	3	4
advising on the conduct of the school	1	2	3	4
ensuring a balanced view of political issues is presented in school	1	2	3	4
regularly evaluating the school	1	2	3	4
assessing the school's assessment/exam results	1	2	3	4
ensuring the national curriculum is followed	1	2	3	4

	very app. 1	fairly app. 2	slightly inapp. 3	highly inapp. 4
preparing an annual report for parents	1	2	3	4
holding an annual parents' meeting	1	2	3	4
managing the <u>capitation</u> budget	1	2	3	4
managing the <u>whole</u> school budget	1	2	3	4
advising headteacher on spending	1	2	3	4
selecting the headteacher	1	2	3	4
selecting new staff (other than the head)	1	2	3	4
disciplining and dismissing staff	1	2	3	4
advising LEA on selection of headteacher	1	2	3	4
advising headteacher on staffing matters	1	2	3	4
representing the school's interests to the LEA	1	2	3	4

19. How much *influence* would you say your governing body has on each of the topic areas?

	a lot 1	some 2	a little 3	none 4
school curriculum	1	2	3	4
staffing	1	2	3	4
buildings & equipment	1	2	3	4
discipline/pupil behaviour	1	2	3	4
home-school links	1	2	3	4
school budget & expenditure	1	2	3	4
other (specify)	1	2	3	4

.....

20. On what matters, if any, would you like your *governing body* to have more influence?
if 'none', tick here:

21. What in your view are the obstacles to the *governing body* having more influence?

22. (a) On what matters, if any, would you like *parent governors* to have more influence?

(b) What in your view are the obstacles to *parent governors* having more influence?

23. With regard to your governing body,

who: (a)sets/ (b)speaks most (c)has most
influences at meetings? influence over
the agenda? governing body?

(CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY)

local education authority	1	1	1
teacher governors	2	2	2
parent governors	3	3	3
LEA governors	4	4	4
other governors	5	5	5
chairman of governing body	6	6	6
headteacher	7	7	7
clerk to the governors	8	8	8
other (specify)	9	9	9

24. Considering each of the following issues in turn, what does the governing body do about them?

(CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY)

	decide school policy	advise head/ staff	check what's happening	let others eg parents/ LEA, know	take action itself	only discuss it	only receive information	has not arisen
school curriculum	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
staffing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
buildings & equipment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
discipline/ pupil behaviour	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
home-school links	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
school budget & expenditure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
other (specify)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

25. Where applicable, could you give *examples* of what your governing body does about these issues?

school
curriculum.....

staffing.....

buildings &
equipment.....

discipline/pupil
behaviour.....

home-school
links.....

school budget
and expenditure.....

other
(specify).....

26. The education system can be judged by (amongst other things) the four criteria listed below. Please put them in order of importance to you as criteria for evaluating the school system, putting 1 against the *most* important, 2 against the next, and so on.

how much *choice* the system offers to parents/pupils
how *efficient* it is in using its resources
extent of *equality* it achieves
the *standards* of education attained

27. Which of the following statements, if any, reflect your views? Put 1 against the statement that you *agree* with most, 2 against the next, etc. Put a cross against any you *disagree* with.

parents and pupils are consumers of the education service and should have rights of choice and redress as customers - as with any other service

parents are partners with the professionals in the shared task of educating their child

involving parents in the school is important because it means that children will learn better

28. What is the most enjoyable or fulfilling aspect of being a governor?

29. What is the most difficult or frustrating part of being a governor?

30. Are there any additional comments you would like to make?

Thank you for your time and co-operation

Would you like a copy of the report of this survey?

yes no

Would you be willing to be interviewed in a further stage of the survey?

yes no

If yes to either, please fill in your name and an address where you can be contacted:

.....

Please return completed questionnaire to: Phil Woods BSc MA,
8 Boleyn Walk, Penylan, CARDIFF CF2 5HR

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- (Please answer all questions whatever category you come into, Where asked about 'your governing body', 'other' governors should answer on the basis of their present governor experience, non-governors should answer on the basis of their experience when they were a governor)

- c) Are you/have you been: chairperson of your governing body vice-chairperson neither ...

2. a) What is the name of the school/schools covered by your governing body (or, if not a governor, attended by your child/ren):

- b) Is it/are they: secondary junior & infant junior infant

- c) Is it/are they: church school(s) special school(s)

3. What is the occupation of the head of your household:
-

4. What is your occupation (if different from Q3):
.....

5. Are you currently (or have you been in the last four years) a member of any of the following? *(please circle your answer)*

Yes No

Any voluntary organisation	1	2
----------------------------	---	---

A political party or other political group	1	2
--	---	---

A church or other religious group	1	2
-----------------------------------	---	---

A trade union or professional association	1	2
---	---	---

Consumers' Association (ie subscriber to Which magazine) or local consumer group	1	2
---	---	---

Neighbourhood group (eg tenants' association, Neighbourhood Watch)	1	2
--	---	---

6. Which political party did you vote for in the General Election held earlier this year?

Conservative 1 Labour 2 Lib Dem 3 Plaid Cymru 4

Other party	5	Did not vote	6	356
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YOUR VIEWS AND EXPERIENCE

7. How appropriate is it in your view for a school governing body to do the following?	very appropriate	fairly appropriate	slightly <u>in</u> appropriate	highly <u>in</u> appropriate
represent the school's interests to the local education authority	1	2	3	4
make changes to school curriculum	1	2	3	4
keep the curriculum up to date	1	2	3	4
decide policy on sex education	1	2	3	4
decide general principles on discipline	1	2	3	4
decide numbers and type of staff needed	1	2	3	4
direct the conduct of the school	1	2	3	4
manage the <u>capitation</u> budget	1	2	3	4
manage <u>whole</u> school budget	1	2	3	4
select the headteacher	1	2	3	4
select new staff, other than head	1	2	3	4
discipline and dismiss staff	1	2	3	4
regularly evaluate the school	1	2	3	4
assess the school's assessment/exam results	1	2	3	4
ensure balanced view of political issues is presented in school	1	2	3	4
ensure the national curriculum is followed	1	2	3	4
advise the headteacher on the curriculum	1	2	3	4
advise headteacher on discipline	1	2	3	4
advise on conduct of the school	1	2	3	4
prepare annual report for parents	1	2	3	4
hold annual parents' meeting	1	2	3	4
advise headteacher on spending	1	2	3	4
advise LEA on selection of headteacher	1	2	3	4
advise headteacher on staffing matters	1	2	3	4

8. The education system can be judged by (amongst other things) the four criteria listed below. Please put them in order of importance to you as criteria for evaluating the school system, putting 1 against the *most* important, 2 against the next, and so on.

how much *choice* the system offers to parents/pupils
 how *efficient* it is in using its resources
 extent of *equality* it achieves
 the *standards* of education attained

9. Which of the following statements, if any, reflect your views? Put 1 against the statement that you *agree* with most, 2 against the next, etc. Put a cross against any you *disagree* with.

parents and pupils are consumers of the education service and should have rights of choice and redress as customers - as with any other service
 parents are partners with the professionals in the shared task of educating their child
 involving parents in the school is important because it means that children will learn better

10. With regard to your governing body who has most influence over it?

(please circle all that apply)

local education authority	1	teacher governors	2
parent governors	3	LEA governors	4
other governors	5	chairman of governing body	6
headteacher	7	clerk to the governors	8
other (specify)	9		

11. On what matters, if any, would you like your *governing body* to have more influence?

(if none, tick here:)

12. On what matters, if any, would you like *parent governors* to have more influence?

(if none, tick here:)

13. Are the following good or poor *descriptions of what you actually do* as a parent governor and member of your school's governing body?

	very good	fairly good	fairly poor	very poor
try to influence political authorities (eg LEAs, central government) on educational matters	1	2	3	4
try to involve parents in influencing political authorities	1	2	3	4
follow guidelines and instructions from political authorities	1	2	3	4
use what the law says to your advantage, in order to bring about changes (eg the law on opting out, health & safety requirements, etc)	1	2	3	4
choose between alternative suppliers (eg of cleaning services, advisory services, book suppliers, etc)	1	2	3	4
try to provide parents with choices <u>within</u> the school (eg curriculum options, times to see teachers, etc)	1	2	3	4
try to ensure parents are informed so they can make choices (either within or between schools)	1	2	3	4
make decisions affecting the conduct of and education provided by the school	1	2	3	4
try to involve parents in decisions affecting the conduct of and education provided by the school	1	2	3	4
directly provide certain services <u>yourself</u> (eg helping with teaching, decorating, maintenance)	1	2	3	4
check the school is meeting the standards and providing the kind of education that:				
<u>you</u> believe it should	1	2	3	4
<u>parents at the school</u> believe it should	1	2	3	4
try to inform parents so they can check the school is meeting standards and providing the education they want	1	2	3	4
check the school is meeting externally-devised standards and criteria:				
from central government (eg national curriculum)	1	2	3	4
from the LEA	1	2	3	4
from other bodies	1	2	3	4
try to inform parents so they can check the school is meeting externally-devised standards and criteria	1	2	3	4
express your views to the governing body	1	2	3	4

(continued next page)

give opportunities to parents to express their views about the school	1	2	3	4
exercise <u>less</u> influence than: the school's headteacher	1	2	3	4
the school's teachers	1	2	3	4
the school's other governors	1	2	3	4
national and local politicians	1	2	3	4

14. Thinking about the parents who have children at your school, on the whole how much interest would you say they have in:

	a lot	some	very little	none
a) influencing decisions made by the school and the governors	1	2	3	4
b) involving themselves in their own child's schooling	1	2	3	4
c) involving themselves in helping the school generally	1	2	3	4
d) checking that the school is doing a good job	1	2	3	4
e) telling the school what they think	1	2	3	4

15. How many training events for governors have you attended?

none.... one.... two..... please write in if more.....

16. Do you/ did you get sufficient support as a governor:

	Yes	No
a) from parents	1	2
b) from central government and the LEA	1	2
c) from headteacher and other school staff	1	2

17. Would you say that parent governors make a contribution different from that of other governors?

Yes	No
1	2

18. Are there problems if you want to raise issues that you consider the governing body should discuss?

Yes	No
1	2

If yes, please explain:

19. Could you give an example of an issue on which a parent governor (yourself or another) has exerted an influence during the past four years?

20. If you would like to add any comments with regard to any of the questions, please feel free to do so below.

Please return the completed form in the pre-paid envelope provided to: Philip Woods,
School of Education, Walton hall, Open University, Milton Keynes

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION

APPENDIX C

CALCULATING PROFILE AND DIMENSION SCORES

Having developed the concept of the consumer-citizen as an ideal type, the challenge was to test it in some way against actual experience as perceived by those who were hypothesised as being consumer-citizens. What evidence could be sought that hypothesised consumer-citizens perceive and act in ways that would be expected by the ideal type? As the consumer-citizen ideal type had incorporated the typology of participatory action developed in the early stages of the study, it was decided that questions used in the 1988 survey, devised within the typology framework, could be used as indicators of attitudes towards the consumer-citizen dimensions (see appendix A and Chapter 6 for an account of the development of the theoretical constructions and its relationship with the survey questions and data). This enabled the development of *aspiration indicators*. A specific set of questions, seeking agreement or disagreement with them as descriptions of what the respondents did as governors, was devised for the 1992 survey with the intention of using these to calculate *experience indicators*.

Further explanation of the difference between these two types of indicator is given in Chapter 6.

The aim was to devise a way of measuring the extent to which *each respondent* resembled the consumer-citizen ideal in terms of their

aspirations and experience. This was done by taking the question or questions relating to each dimension, scoring the responses to each question, and dividing the product by the number of questions to give a figure between one and four. Thus, each respondent could be given for each dimension two aspiration scores (one for 1988, one for 1992), and an experience score for 1992. A scale of 1 to 4 was used for each dimension because the bulk of relevant questions offered respondents four graded options: for example, from 'very appropriate' through 'fairly appropriate' and 'slightly inappropriate' to 'highly inappropriate' (questions 18 and 7 respectively on the 1988 and 1992 survey questionnaires).

The means by which aspiration dimension scores were calculated are set out below (the scoring scale for each dimension is 1 to 4).

acting as a member of a political community

aspiration indicator =

* representing the school's interests to the local education authority

the score for this question (1 = very appropriate, 2 = fairly appropriate, 3 = slightly inappropriate, 4 = highly inappropriate) is taken as dimension score

choosing

aspiration indicator =

- * rating of 'choice' as criteria for evaluating the school system (as compared with other criteria)
- * rating of statement that parents and pupils are consumers of the education service with rights of choice and redress (as compared with other statements)

the ratings given by the respondent for each question (the 'choice' criterion can be placed as number 1, 2, 3 or 4; the statement mentioning 'consumers' can be placed number 1, 2 or 3) are added together, the total then divided by two; a score of 4 is possible where a parent governor answered only the first of the questions and placed the 'choice' criterion number 4 - otherwise the maximum score is 3.5

doing

aspiration indicator =

appropriateness of decision-making activities:

- * making changes to the school curriculum
- * keeping curriculum up to date
- * deciding policy on sex education
- * deciding general principles on discipline
- * deciding numbers and type of staff needed
- * directing the conduct of the school
- * managing the capitation budget
- * managing the whole school budget
- * selecting the headteacher
- * selecting new staff (other than the head)
- * disciplining and dismissing staff

the ratings for each question (same range 1 to 4 as with acting as a member of a political community above) are added, the total then divided by 11

checking

aspiration indicator =

appropriateness of:

- * regularly evaluating the school
- * assessing the school's assessment/exam results

the ratings for each question (same range 1 to 4 as with acting as a member of a political community above) are added, the total then divided by 2

applying

aspiration indicator =

appropriateness of:

- * ensuring a balanced view of political issues is presented in school
- * ensuring the national curriculum is followed

the ratings for each question (same range 1 to 4 as with acting as a member of a political community above) are added, the total then divided by 2

participating

aspiration indicator =

appropriateness of:

- * advising headteacher on the curriculum
- * advising headteacher on discipline
- * advising on the conduct of the school
- * preparing an annual report for parents
- * holding an annual parents' meeting
- * advising headteacher on spending
- * advising LEA on selection of headteacher
- * advising headteacher on staffing matters

(participating continued)
the ratings for each question (same range 1 to 4 as with acting as a member of a political community above) are added, the total then divided by 8

powerlessness/desire for more influence

aspiration indicator =

- * desire for more influence for governing body
- * desire for more influence for parent governors
- * rating of parent governors' influence (compared with other governors, clerk to governing body, headteacher)

score 1 when all the following apply: respondent wants more influence for governing body; respondent wants more influence for parent governors; respondent does not indicate that he or she perceives parent governors as one of most influential groups on the governing body

score 2 when any 2 of these apply

score 3 when any 1 applies

score 4 where none applies

Where an aspiration dimension score could not be calculated because none of the questions had been completed, that respondent was excluded from the process of calculating a consumer-citizen profile score. Five in the 1988 sample fell into this category and were consequently excluded from future analysis (leaving 61 for which profile score could be assigned). Amongst these 61, few of the indicator questions were left unanswered. However, where they were, a dimension score was calculated using those questions that had been answered.

The means by which experience dimension scores were calculated are set out below. This involved questions which had been devised for the 1992 questionnaire. They were formulated in light of the work that had been undertaken since 1988 (see Appendix A) and were of a more general nature than the aspiration indicators. Again, the scoring scale for each dimension is from 1 to 4.

The experience indicators consist of the extent to which the activities (listed under each dimension below) are seen by respondents as good or poor descriptions of what they actually do as a parent governor and member of school's governing body.

acting as a member of a political community

- * try to influence political authorities (eg LEAs, central government) on educational matters
- * try to involve parents in influencing political authorities
- * follow guidelines and instructions from political authorities
- * use what the law says to your advantage, in order to bring about changes (eg the law on opting out, health & safety requirements, etc)

choosing

- * choose between alternatives (eg of cleaning services, advisory services, book suppliers, etc)
- * try to provide parents with choices within the school (eg curriculum options, times to see teachers, etc)
- * try to ensure parents are informed so they can make choices (either within or between schools)

doing

- * make decisions affecting the conduct of and education provided by the school
- * try to involve parents in decisions affecting the provided by the school
- * directly provide certain services yourself (eg helping with teaching, decorating, maintenance)

checking

check the school is meeting the standards and providing the kind of education that:

- * you believe it should
- * parents at the school believe it should
- * try to inform parents so they can check the school is meeting standards and providing the education they want

applying

check the school is meeting externally-devised standards and criteria:

- * from central government (eg national curriculum)
- * from the LEA
- * from other bodies
- * try to inform parents so they can check the school is meeting externally-devised standards and criteria

participating

- * express your views to the governing body
- * give opportunities to parents to express their views about the school

powerlessness/desire for more influence

exercise less influence than:

- * the school's headteacher
- * the school's teachers
- * the school's other governors
- * national and local politicians

Experience dimension scores were calculated in the same way for each dimension. The ratings for each question (the range was the same for each one: 1 = very good, 2 = fairly good, 3 = fairly poor, 4 = very poor) are added, the total then divided by the total number of questions, giving a figure between 1 and 4. In the few cases where a question had not been answered, a dimension score was calculated using those that had. Experience indicators could be calculated for all 37 respondents to the 1992 survey.

Aspiration profile scores and experience profile scores were calculated for each respondent by adding together their respective dimension scores. All profile dimension scores fell between 7 (representing the score closest to the consumer-citizen ideal) and 28 (representing the score furthest from the ideal).

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